

NASH NEXT SPOTLIGHT: CAM IS BURNIN' DOWN THE HOUSE

Q&A WITH
NEWCOMER
**LINDSAY
ELL**

NASH Country Weekly

COUNTRY FOR LIFE | AUGUST 24, 2015

THE BLAKE AND MIRANDA EFFECT

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SHELTON**
AND **MIRANDA
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1975 SATURDAY,
AUG. 23



“Rhinestone” Gem

GLEN CAMPBELL, known for his uncanny ability for picking songs, once recalled that discovering “Rhinestone Cowboy” was one of his greatest thrills. In his autobiography, actually titled *Rhinestone Cowboy*, Glen remembered that he heard a cassette copy sung by the song’s writer, Larry Weiss, and was hooked on the lyrical imagery. The tune about an aspiring singer almost seemed like his own life story, capsulizing the struggle for success with lines like, *There’s been a load of compromisin’ / On the road to my horizon*. For the recording of “Rhinestone Cowboy,” Glen was determined to allow the lyrics to call attention to themselves. “This was the first time I had ever made a record in which the words needed to shine above my singing,” Glen noted in the book. Listeners obviously got the message. “Rhinestone Cowboy” became Glen’s biggest crossover smash, hitting No. 1 on the country charts on Aug. 23, 1975, and topping the pop charts in early September. This year, we salute the 40th anniversary of Glen’s classic.

2015

AUG. 18: GRAND OLE NIGHT

Come to Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry on Tuesday, Aug. 18, and get a double treat. For the Opry show itself, you’ll see actor/writer **BILLY BOB THORNTON** in action with his group, The Boxmasters, along with **DUSTIN LYNCH**, **CRAIG MORGAN**, **DAVID NAIL** and **THE OAK RIDGE BOYS**. Following the performances, The Oaks’ premier bass vocalist, Richard Sterban, will sign copies of his book, *From Elvis to Elvira*, inside the Opry Shop. Can we get an oom-papa-mow-mow?



AUG. 21-22: PEACHY RETURN

One of Georgia’s favorite sons, **LUKE BRYAN**, returns to his home state for two nights, Aug. 21 and Aug. 22 at Philips Arena in Atlanta. Luke’s Kick the Dust Up Tour stop features opening acts **RANDY HOUSER** and **DUSTIN LYNCH**.



AUG. 21: FLIP FOR KIP

Fans have been eagerly waiting for **KIP MOORE** to release his sophomore album, and they’re about to get their wish. Kip’s new effort, *Wild Ones*, hits stores and online retailers on Aug. 21.



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August 24, 2015

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The marriage between **BLAKE SHELTON** and **MIRANDA LAMBERT** may be over, but their effect on country music is long-lasting.

PLUS!



27 It's been a not-quite-predictable journey to Nashville for the singularly named California native **CAM**. The rising newcomer talks about her diverse musical influences as she prepares to release her first full-length album.



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Blake & Miranda by Jason Merritt/Getty Images; Cam by Nirelle Efremova/Sony Music Nashville
on cover: Blake & Miranda by Chase Rollins/AFP; Debby Wong/Corbis

How To Select the *NEXT* Country Music Superstar!



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*The image shown of the "Ceremonies" is used with permission for promotional purposes only.

NASH
NEXT

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You can help put your favorite country music performer, or band into the finals by visiting www.nashnextcountry.com, or download the free NASH NEXT mobile app available in the App Store or Google Play.

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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Divorce is never easy on anyone, let alone those who have to go through it in the public eye. So many rumors, lies and even truths get twisted around one way or the other. I don't know why Miranda and Blake got a divorce, nor do I need to know. I just know that two people—who I consider friends of the magazine—are going through a difficult time and I only want to wish the best for them both.

One thing is for sure: Blake and Miranda have had a major impact on country music as a couple. In this issue, we take a look back at all the

good things that came from their union. I know they will continue to help shape and influence country music for the better, and we'll be there to share the stories. We wish them both continued success and much happiness.

Speaking of good things in country music, our Nash Next feature focuses on newcomer Cam, who is burning up (pun intended) the airwaves with her new single, "Burning House." We caught up with Cam to talk to her about her *hot* (I did it again) new single and the trail she's blazing (doh!) in country music.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands Aug. 24, as we pay tribute to the late Lynn Anderson.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

FROM THE READER



After we relayed the news of Blake and Miranda's divorce, *Nash Country Weekly* readers took to Twitter and Facebook to let us know how they feel.

TWITTER

@countryweekly makes me so sad.

BECKI

@BeckiM59

@countryweekly this can't be true!!

CLAIRE CLEMENTS

@lytab_au

@countryweekly I didn't really believe it until *Country Weekly* and CMT started saying it. I've never heard it from them before.

KRISTEN NICOLE

@Krisssyyy_Nicole

FACEBOOK

So bummed. Did not see this coming. But I do wish them well in their futures. Divorce is never easy on anyone.

KATHRYN NANA SMITH

I thought if any country couple was going to last forever it was them! That's really too bad!

MARY HEIDE-GIESBRECHT

They made a perfect couple!!! Dont understand people, these days!

DEBBY MANNING

BIRTHDAY BASH

I enjoy receiving my *Nash Country Weekly* in the mail each week. I read it from cover to cover and enjoy reading all the news about the country stars and where they are going to be in concert. I don't know if I am not seeing it or if it's not in the new format of the magazine, but I don't see a listing of the stars and their birthdays for the month. I always enjoyed seeing when the stars celebrated their birthdays. Great magazine.

MARSHA STILLER

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Thank you for your letter, Marsha. We did miss a couple of issues, but you can now find stars' birthdays in The Brew section toward the front of the magazine.

EVERYONE'S BUDDY

I was hoping to see a story on Buddy Emmons passing away this week. He played with some of the greatest stars in the business. Thanks for writing about the stars that we have lost. They can never be replaced. Keep up your good work.

ALICE HERZOG

Austin, Texas

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Thank you for writing, Alice. Buddy was a dazzling pedal steel guitarist whose musical legacy will not soon be forgotten. We will have a write-up of Buddy's passing included in our Aug. 31 issue, on stands Aug. 21.

Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

MAIL:

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Weekly**

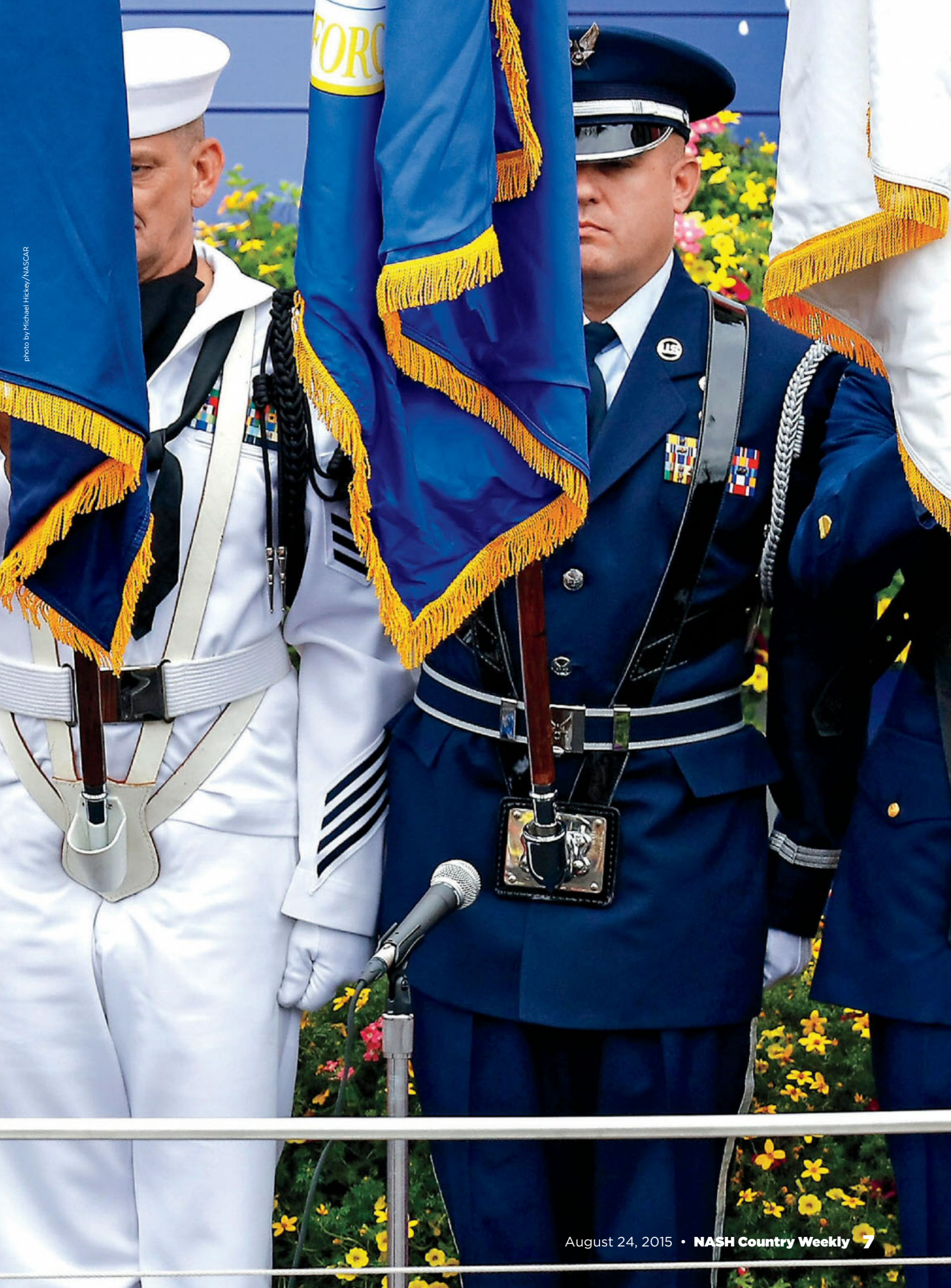
COUNTRY FOR LIFE

FIRST TAKE

RACE CAR ON RED

Kellie Pickler performs the national anthem before the Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in July.







Putting *literacy*
center stage.



Your ticket shows you care

Use the code "TEACH" when purchasing Grand Ole Opry August show tickets, and a portion of the proceeds will go to support literacy efforts as part of the Opry's 90th Anniversary Cause for Applause initiative.

Kleenex
SOMEONE NEEDS ONE

THE COUNTRY
BREW

Tearful Moments



OCTOBER 17, 2014

Big-Time Surprise

The critically acclaimed Grammy-winning vocal group **LITTLE BIG TOWN** (**KAREN FAIRCHILD, PHILLIP SWEET, KIMBERLY SCHLAPMAN** and **JIMI WESTBROOK**) was formally inducted into the Grand Ole Opry by Opry members **LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS** and **VINCE GILL** on Oct. 17, 2014. During LBT's Opry performance on Oct. 3, Reba McEntire surprised the quartet with an invitation to join the Opry. The night marked a major milestone for the group, whose first-ever public performance together was on the Opry in 1999.

LBT opened their induction-night set with a performance of their hit "Bring It On Home," hearkening back to their Opry debut. On that night, as the members recalled backstage, their only accompaniment was a borrowed guitar. After the group's performance of the smash "Boondocks," Little Jimmy and Vince took the stage to present the group with its Opry Member Award. "The word 'family' really means something out here. It really does," Vince said to the group. "You'll make friends like I have with this man right here," he continued, nodding to Little Jimmy. "You'll be so be blessed by the friends you'll make out here, and they'll last your entire life. Welcome to the family, and remember to come here as often as you can."

Backstage, group members reflected on having grown up with the Opry and on its importance to their music. "This feels like the biggest moment of our lives and our career," said Kimberly.

"I'm so excited about sharing this moment with the band," Karen added. "We've been through the highest of highs together, and this is sure to be the highest. This is as good as it gets."

This year, it's reading, writing and *caring.*

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Setting the stage for literacy

As part of the Grand Ole Opry's 90th Anniversary Cause for Applause initiative, the Opry will donate a portion of ticket sales, welcome special guest announcers and present exclusive content on opry.com all in the name of literacy.

Show you care

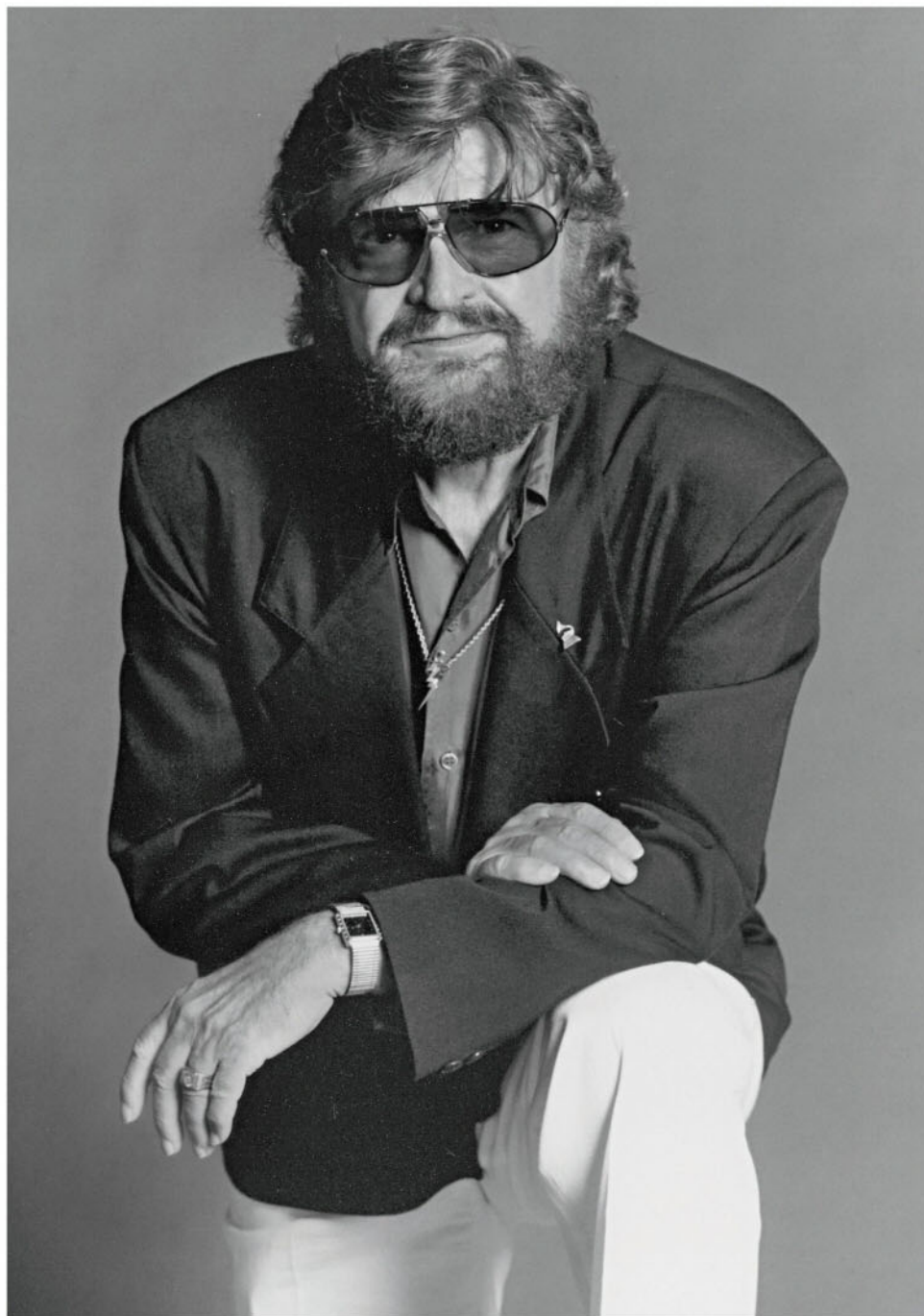
Show your support by shopping Kleenex® at Dollar General and visiting the Grand Ole Opry® this August. You can also donate directly at dollargeneral/dgliteracy.com

Kleenex
SOMEONE NEEDS ONE

THE COUNTRY BREW

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

Opening Act



WORKS OF THE ARCHITECT

It's hardly an overstatement to say that music as we know it today wouldn't exist without **SAM PHILLIPS**. By finding and recording the talents of **JOHNNY CASH**, **ROY ORBISON**, **ELVIS PRESLEY**, **JERRY LEE LEWIS** and many others at Sun Studio in Memphis, Sam reshaped popular music, from rock 'n' roll to country to blues and beyond. It's only fitting that the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum pay tribute with a new exhibit, *Flyin' Saucers Rock & Roll: The Cosmic Genius of Sam Phillips*, which opens on Aug. 28.

photo courtesy the Phillips family and CMHOF



(Above) **SEA LEGS** With his toes in the water, Darius Rucker looks as happy as a blowfish while filming his music video for “Southern Style”; (below left) **GOOD & PLENTI** Nick Jonas (left) and Pitbull bookend Keith Urban at their PlentiTogether LIVE concert in New York City in July; (below right) **ALL ABOUT THAT BASS** A Thousand Horses’ Graham DeLoach deserves a hand for taking his bass-playing skills to the next level.





(Above) **NO MOSS** The Rolling Stone's Keith Richards gathers a hug from Lee Ann Womack; (below left) **THIS CAR** Cassadee Pope is a big enough star now to trade in her vintage dirt modified for a private jet; (below right) **BLOND BOMBERS** Sunny Sweeney (left) and Trisha Yearwood heat up the set of *Trisha's Southern Kitchen*.



(Above) **LOSE MY MIND** Brett Eldredge doesn't seem to mind this horse face; (below) **ON THE ROAD AGAIN** Texas country music mainstay Wade Bowen (left) is in the presence of greatness: Ben Dorcy, Willie Nelson's 90-year-old roadie.



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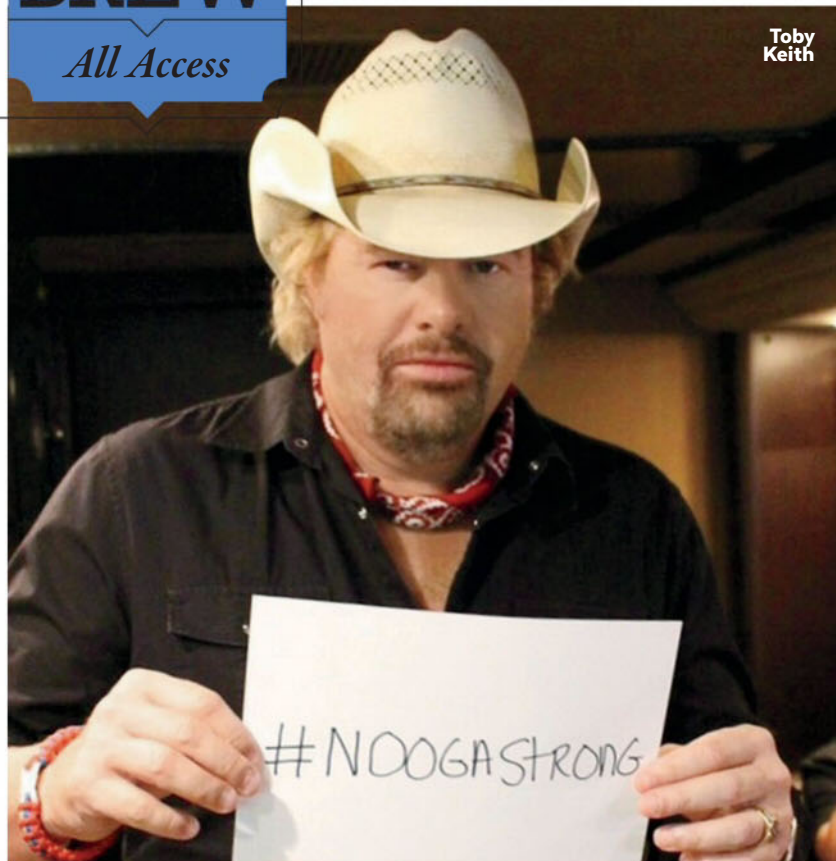
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Toby
Keith

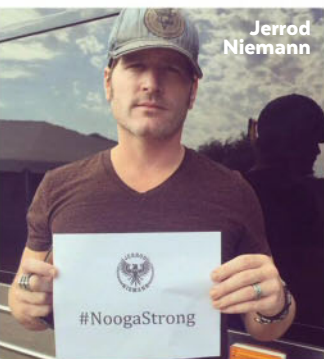


Kelsea
Ballerini



LOCASH

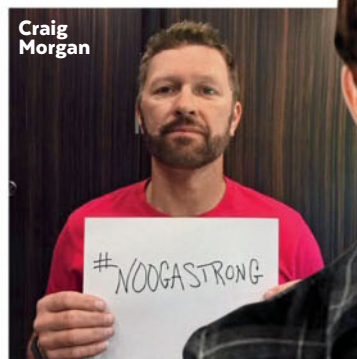
#NOOGASTRONG In the wake of the senseless shooting in Chattanooga, Tenn., that killed four Marines and a Navy specialist on July 16, many stars from the country music community showed their support by taking to Instagram and Twitter with the #NoogaStrong hashtag.



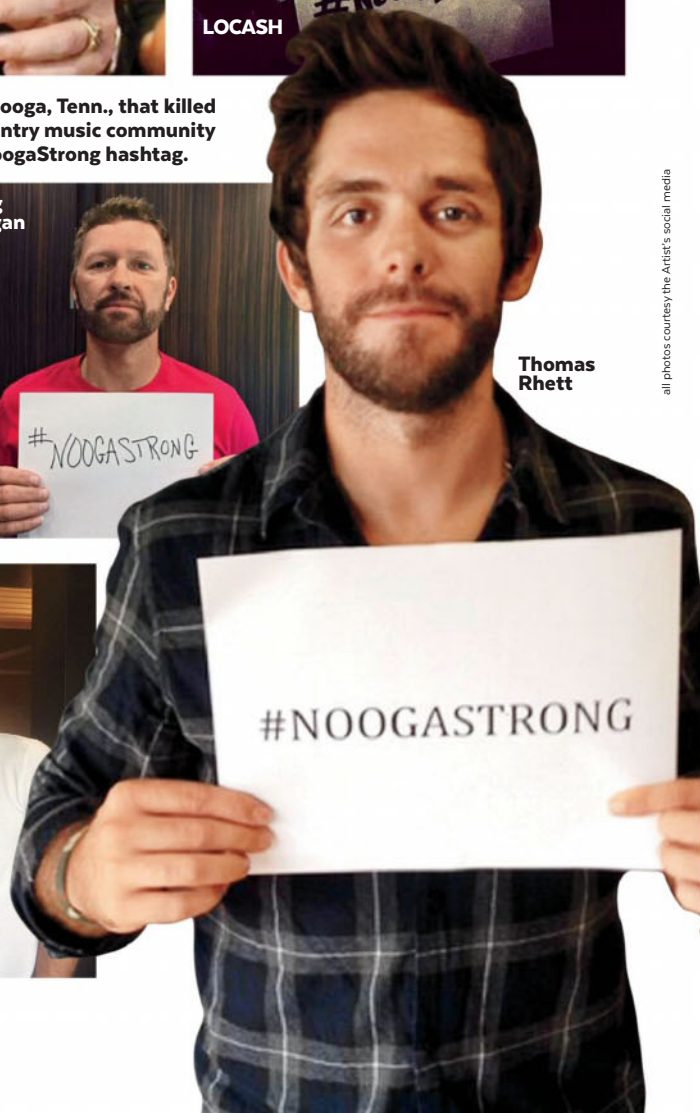
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Morgan



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Rhett



A Thousand
Horses



The Cadillac Three



Ashley Monroe



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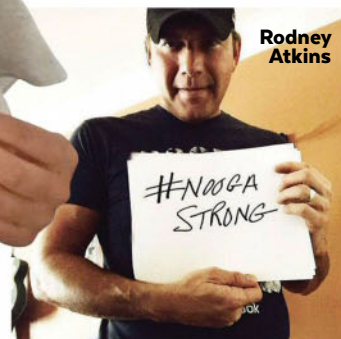
Cam



Thompson Square



Jason Aldean (left) with Tyler Farr



Rodney Atkins



Lauren Alaina



Rascal Flatts



DANCING IN THE STREET

Venerable downtown Nashville institution Tootsie's Orchid Lounge will celebrate its 55th birthday in a perfectly appropriate manner: with a huge concert. Slated for Oct. 21, the free show will be held in the middle of Broadway and provide entertainment throughout the day. Leading the entertainment lineup for the event are **RANDY HOUSER**, **JAMEY JOHNSON**, **TERRI CLARK**, **TROY GENTRY** and others. Make plans to be present. The Tootsie's birthday bash has cultivated a reputation for being the kind of place where Kid Rock or Dierks Bentley might pop by unannounced. You never know what will happen.



GEORGE STRAIT LIVE... ON DVD

If you weren't one of the thousands lucky enough to attend **GEORGE STRAIT's** farewell show last year at



AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, you're in luck! You can get the next best thing when George releases the DVD *The Cowboy Rides Away: Live From AT&T Stadium* on Aug. 28.

In addition to the 40-song set, which features guest appearances from

Jason Aldean, Kenny Chesney, Eric Church, Miranda Lambert, Alan Jackson, Martina McBride, Vince Gill, Faith Hill, Ray Benson and Sheryl Crow, the DVD also includes bonus commentary from George and interviews with his guests.



GOOD GRAMMER

As EDM continues its journey to take over the entire world, it should be no surprise that elements of the popular sound are working their way into country music. The latest of the bunch is not so much a production technique as a flat-out reworking of a popular tune, as **ANDY GRAMMER** has joined up with **ELI YOUNG BAND** to rerecord his No. 1 hit "Honey, I'm Good." With EYB's assistance, the rousing ode to monogamy and fidelity retains the danceable tempo of the original, but Andy's countryish vocal melody is laid on top of a more acoustic, bluegrass-inspired arrangement. "This is a great country song," says EYB's Mike Eli. "We fell in love with it before Andy ever asked us to be part of this release. Andy is an incredible singer and one heck of a songwriter, so we couldn't be happier to help expand upon what he's already accomplished. We can't wait for everyone to hear the new version."

BIRTHDAYS

AUG. 17, 1955
KEVIN WELCH

AUG. 17, 1988
COLTON SWON
of The Swon
Brothers

AUG. 18, 1955
STEVE
WILKINSON
of The Wilkinsons

AUG. 19, 1944
EDDY RAVEN

AUG. 19, 1966
LEE ANN
WOMACK

AUG. 19, 1969
CLAY WALKER

AUG. 20, 1952
RUDY GATLIN
of The Gatlin
Brothers

AUG. 20, 1952
JOHN HIATT

AUG. 21, 1938
KENNY ROGERS

AUG. 21, 1939
HAROLD REID
of The Statler
Brothers

AUG. 21, 1988
KACEY
MUSGRAVES

AUG. 22, 1957
HOLLY DUNN

AUG. 22, 1960
COLLIN RAYE

AUG. 23, 1949
WOODY PAUL
of Riders
in the Sky

AUG. 23, 1969
IRA DEAN
of Trick Pony

IN MEMORIAM



Renowned singer, songwriter, musician and a pioneer in the Red Dirt music scene **TOM SKINNER** passed away July 12 in Tulsa, Okla., according to *The Oklahoman*. Tom began his musical career after graduating from Oklahoma State University, and one of his early Stillwater gigs was playing bass in Garth Brooks' band, Santa Fe. Artists from all over Texas and Oklahoma shared their heartbreak on social media, including Wade Bowen, who wrote, "Tom Skinner was a sweetheart of a man. Always so full of smiles and life every time I was around him. A bright light in this world. He will be missed, but loved forever." Tom was 61. He is survived by his son, Jeremy, and grandson, Flash.

Our condolences go out to the friends and family of mid-'90s country artist **DARON NORWOOD**, who was found dead in his Herford, Texas, apartment on July 22 at the age of 49. Daron released his self-titled debut album in 1995 and had moderate chart success with songs like "If It Wasn't for Her, I Wouldn't Have You," "Cowboys Don't Cry" and "Bad Dog, No Biscuit." He took a break from recording after the release of his 1995 sophomore album, and in 2002, he told *Country Weekly*, "I didn't quit on life, but I quit the bus, I quit the band, I quit the record deal, quit the shows, the alcohol, the drugs. I quit it all with a phone call to my then-manager saying, 'I'm done. And I do mean done—with it all.'" The cause of Daron's death is still pending, but investigators do not suspect foul play.



GET TO KNOW . . . *Chris Janson*

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO SPEND YOUR DAY OFF?
With my wife and kids.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO WITH YOUR WIFE AND KIDS?
Honestly, whatever they want to do, whether it be go get some ice cream in downtown Franklin, drive around the country, hang out or go to Chuck E. Cheese.

WHAT ARE THREE WORDS THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOU?
Honest, loving and married.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE GOT TO DO EVERY SINGLE DAY?
Wake up.

WHAT IS A STRANGE FACT ABOUT YOU?
I don't whistle normal. I whistle weird. I don't look like a normal person would when whistling.

WHAT IS YOUR MUST-HAVE TOUR ACCESSORY?
Mountain Dew.

WHAT ARE THREE THINGS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?
Live to be over 100, be one of the biggest land owners in America and kill a deer over 200 inches.

WHAT ARE THREE THINGS YOU CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT?
My wife, my kids and Jesus.





OLYMPIC-SIZED EFFORT

It's been a little while since we've had new music from sweet and talented **CASADEE POPE**, so when it came time to introduce a new tune, the diminutive artist did it in a big way. Cassadee debuted her empowering new single, "I Am Invincible," at the star-studded opening ceremonies for the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles last month. The day's festivities also included performances from Stevie Wonder, Avril Lavigne and Nicole Scherzinger, while Hollywood's Colin Farrell participated in the Parade of Athletes and Mike D. of the Beastie Boys emceed the pre-show. "I Am Invincible" is the first single from Cassadee's upcoming sophomore album.

ON TOUR | THE KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS | FALL 2015 TOUR

Aug. 14
Barnum, Minn.
Carlton County Fair

Aug. 19
Des Moines, Iowa
Iowa State Fair

Aug. 21
Miles City, Mont.
Eastern Montana Fair

Aug. 22
Fort Pierre, S.D.
Bad River Music Series

Aug. 23
Appleton, Minn.
Swift County Fair

Aug. 27
Pulaski, Tenn.
Giles County Lions Club Fair

Aug. 29
Hamlin, W.Va.
Heat'N the Hills
Chilifest



Aug. 30
Charleston, W.Va.
Live on Mountain Stage
with Larry Groce

Sept. 5
Maryville, Tenn.
The Shed at Smoky
Mountain Harley-
Davidson

Sept. 6
Chillicothe, Ohio
Ross County Fair

Sept. 12
Arbyrd, Mo.
Arbyrd City Park

Sept. 19
Bardstown, Ky.
The Kentucky
Bourbon Festival

Sept. 25
**West Siloam
Springs, Okla.**
Cherokee Casino & Hotel

Sept. 26
Cotter, Ark.
Bridge Bash 2015

Oct. 4
Louisville, Ky.
Louder Than Life
Music Festival

Oct. 8
Helena, Ark.
King Biscuit
Blues Festival

Oct. 10
Appomattox, Va.
Appomattox
Railroad Festival

Oct. 17
Wyandotte, Okla.
Bordertown Casino

Oct. 23
Medina, Minn.
Medina Entertainment
Center

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Nominees for the 2015 Canadian Country Music Association Awards were announced back in July, and the annual awards show takes place Sept. 13 at Scotiabank Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Here are the nominees in the top categories.



FANS' CHOICE AWARD

Gord Bamford
Paul Brandt
Dean Brody
Johnny Reid
Dallas Smith

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

5:01
Tim Hicks

County Line
High Valley

Gypsy Road
Dean Brody

Lifted
Dallas Smith

Light Up the Night
Jess Moskaluke

FEMALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Terri Clark
Kira Isabella
Beverley Mahood
Jess Moskaluke
MacKenzie Porter

MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Gord Bamford
Dean Brody
Tim Hicks
Brett Kissel
Dallas Smith

"SHAVING WITH SOAP AND WATER
WON'T GET YOUR LEGS
THIS SOFT AND SMOOTH!"

- Jana Kramer



Pure Silk Shave Cream contains aloe to moisturize your skin, giving you the smoothest, most touchable legs without irritation. Shaving with Pure Silk is the easiest way to *love your legs!*

PureSilk®



Elite Eats

ZAC BROWN and his merry band of music makers have teamed with executive chef Rusty Hamlin for a new TV series, **RUSTY'S ROCKFEAST: BACKSTAGE WITH ZAC BROWN BAND**. The seven half-hour episodes, which began airing on FYI on July 23, take viewers behind the scenes of ZBB's Eat & Greets, the sit-down meals that ZBB hosts for 150 fans before many of their shows. Each episode features chef Rusty and ZBB cooking the menu, which is improvised each day based on fresh local ingredients, in a state-of-the-art 18-wheel mobile kitchen named Cookie. Check fyi.tv for the up-to-date schedule.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

Red Dirt raconteur **STONEY LARUE** was arrested on July 20 for domestic violence. According to Oklahoma City police, Stoney was taken into custody after pushing his girlfriend down a flight of stairs. Stoney posted a Facebook message the following day, stating, "I want to apologize to my family, my friends and my fans for the recent circumstances that have come to light. I am going to take some time to work on myself. I will be entering an intensive and extensive program, and I appreciate your thoughts and good wishes for me during this trying time. Please check my Facebook page for updates on my upcoming tour dates, but most importantly, I appreciate your support during this time."



KICKIN' IT

KIX BROOKS Q&A with BILLY CURRINGTON

KIX: You a wine fan?

BILLY: Yes, I studied for about two years on how to grow grapes and make wine

KIX: Did you really?

BILLY: Yeah, when I was living back home in Georgia. Because I obtained a piece of land in Leiper's Fork one time. It's got hills on it and all that stuff that's good for

growing grapes. I just never made it there yet. It takes so much work and so much excavating and planning.

KIX: Did you get rid of your land?

BILLY: No, I still got it and I've actually been on the beer kick, making beer. I went ahead and learned that trade first. I really enjoy that. And

for sure I've studied how to make whiskey and rum and all that. But you need a whole different master distiller's license for that. It's all up here [points to his head].

KIX: I want to try your beer?

BILLY: OK, I'll bring you some. Do you like ales or oatmeal stouts?

KIX: Either way—I just like tasting it. I love almost any kind of beer

BILLY: Small breweries are popping up all over the U.S. They haven't overtaken Budweiser yet [laughs]. They are on their way.

KIX: Where you living now?

BILLY: Georgia. I was born and raised on an island called Tybee Island; Savannah, Georgia, area. Of course I eventually moved [to Nashville] when I was 18 to do the whole career thing. But I missed home. I missed the ocean. I'm a big fan of the

ocean. So I moved back four or five years ago. I'm back down there right on the water.

KIX: You got good waves down there and stuff? You surf down there?

BILLY: Big time. Yeah, we got big waves. We had eight feet the other day. We have two to three feet on the average. But every now and then we get big swells, hurricane swells.

KIX: You ever get in trouble out there, stuff over your head?

BILLY: They get that way, but I've been blessed. I've been doing it so long I can get out there without a board and swim it. I think if you can swim it with nothing, then it's OK to go out there and try it. But if you can't swim it without a board . . . 'cause there's times the board will get gone and you are out there alone. It's not too hard for me.

Hidden Wonders of the Wilderness Come to Life in Beautiful Style

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Back



Front

"Guiding Spirits of the Wilderness" Hoodie

Versatile hoodie crafted in a
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Albums



Maddie & Tae

Start Here

DOT RECORDS

B+

For those blithely snickering that “Girl in a Country Song” (included on the album) represented both the alpha and the omega for the young duo, we can tell you to wipe that collective smirk off your face. Because these girls own the songwriting skills and vocal chops to make it for the long haul and avoid being little more than the answer to a trivia question years from now. From the first cut, “Waitin’ on a Plane,” they show a keen instinct for melody and vocal arrangement, with changes in inflection, nifty phrasing and the occasional aching catch in the voice where you don’t expect it. Maddie & Tae are at their best when the action goes up-tempo, as in “Shut Up and Fish,” which turns the tables on the battle of the sexes, to be sure. “Your Side of Town,” which neatly rhymes “apologies”



and “biography” (take that, bro-country), is as close to a musical restraining order as has ever been expressed on record. In their humorously skewed views of relationships, their writing can remind you of the witticisms of Kacey Musgraves, perhaps without the biting edge. But they can also be assertive, with songs

like “Sierra,” and playfully sexy (“Right Here, Right Now”) without coming off as contrived, which should certainly appeal to female listeners especially. The album’s closer, “Downside of Growing Up,” speaks poignantly to anyone who’s ever left home and can’t rely on Mom and Dad to bail them out anymore. Only a couple of selections,

the duo’s second single release, “Fly,” and “Smoke,” miss their marks. Otherwise, *Start Here* is, well, a good place to start.

BOB PAXMAN

LONG STORY SHORT:

There’s enough versatility and variety here to keep listeners engaged. You’re going to hear more from Maddie & Tae.



Michael Ray

Michael Ray

ATLANTIC RECORDS/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE



Michael Ray's "Kiss You in the Morning" is a bona fide hit, a swaggering three-minute ode to a one-night stand with a beautiful woman. Too bad the rest of his self-titled debut doesn't do much to expand on that single's potential, staying close to the topics of chasing women ("Another Girl," "Look Like This") or being in love with them ("Run Away With You"). The best tunes from *Michael Ray* build on those ideas in unexpected ways. In "This Love," he boasts of past flings, but says none of them compares to the love he has now. But it's ultimately hard to get past the noxious "Real Men Love Jesus," in which fast cars, football and dirty hands (among other things) are tied to a masculine ideal for the kind of philosophy you get from a cheap bumper sticker. Sorry, dudes who like baseball, fuel-efficient sedans or personal hygiene—you'll need to get your validation from someone else.

JON FREEMAN



Pat Green

Home

THIRTY TIGERS/GREENHORSE MUSIC



Maybe it's the sound of a grown man, comfortable in his skin and happy with his life and career. Maybe it's gentle production and lyrics that mean something, whether it be about the ache of missing your family, mistakes made and lessons learned or good times that never end, or maybe it's a tongue-in-cheek ode to Lone Star ladies with Lyle Lovett. Maybe it's that it's as different as a slab of brisket after a year of oatmeal. Maybe it's a Texas thing. Maybe it's just damn good. Yeah, that's it.

TAMMY RAGUSA

WHAT'S SPINNING AT NCW

We took a peek at NASH network producer Nikita Palmer's work playlist to see what was helping her get through the day.

SAM HUNT

"House Party"

THOMAS RHETT

"Crash and Burn"

REBA McENTIRE

"Going Out Like That"

SHENANDOAH

"Two Dozen Roses"

JASON ALDEAN

"Do You Wish It Was Me"

PATTY LOVELESS

"The Trouble With the Truth"

LOOK FOR THIS NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY PLAYLIST ON **rdio**

Video

Dan + Shay

"Nothin' Like You"

WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE



In their new video for "Nothin' Like You," Dan + Shay cheese up a story line from *The Hangover* by adding a canine twist. In a dream sequence after an epic night of partying at the ACM Awards, the boys unknowingly find themselves in possession of a dog, but the bowser flees the scene when a female pooch catches his eye. A chase sequence ensues—with more dogs, including gratuitous puppies—which culminates with a little mud wrestling in the rain and a special message from the duo that brings to light the worthwhile work of National Canine and Proverbs 12:10 Animal Rescue. JIM CASEY



CUT *that* OUT

Peek-a-boo, I see you! Or I see a little bit of the skin you're in. Thanks to a new trend in fashion that features clever cutouts, the ladies of country are getting a little flirty with their red carpet apparel. **MADDIE MARLOW** and **TAE DYE** of Maddie & Tae, **JANA KRAMER**, **MIRANDA LAMBERT**, *The Walking Dead's* **EMILY KINNEY** and **KIMBERLY PERRY** of The Band Perry know that a little goes a long way, but they work hard for those toned bods, so they may as well show them off a bit.

(From top, left to right)
Emily Kinney, Kimberly Perry,
Jana Kramer, Miranda Lambert,
Tae Dye and Maddie Marlow





photo by Lou Rocco/ABC

PASTA PERFECT

JESSIE JAMES DECKER AND HER FOOTBALL-PLAYING HUSBAND HELP CREATE A TASTY SHRIMP AND PASTA DISH ON *THE CHEW*.

Country singer Jessie James Decker and her husband, Eric Decker, a wide receiver for the NFL's New York Jets, formed a winning team in the kitchen on a recent episode of ABC's popular daytime show *The Chew*. Jessie and Eric prepared Cajun Shrimp Pasta, with a little guidance from one of the show's resident experts, Mario Batali. Here's the recipe for this perfect summertime savory.

BOB PAXMAN

Cajun Shrimp Pasta (Makes 4-6 servings)

1 pound spaghetti
1 stick butter (divided)
Olive oil
¼ medium onion
1 can mushrooms
1 small bunch asparagus (cut into 1-inch pieces)
1 can mild diced tomatoes with green chilies
1 pound medium-sized shrimp (peeled and deveined)
1 cup half-and-half
Salt, pepper and Creole seasoning to taste
Parmesan cheese (to garnish)

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. **ADD** the spaghetti and cook according to package directions. **DRAIN** and set aside.

In a large sauté pan, **MELT** a half stick of butter and **ADD** a drizzle of olive oil. **SAUTÉ** the onions, mushrooms and asparagus for 3 to 5 minutes or until the onions are translucent. **ADD** the can of diced tomatoes with green chilies and let simmer. **ADD** the shrimp and half-and-half. **SEASON** with salt, pepper and Creole seasoning.

COVER with a lid and cook 3 to 5 minutes, until shrimp are cooked through.

ADD the cooked spaghetti and **TOSS** to dress. Serve with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.



with **Lindsay Ell**

.....

Canadian-born Lindsay Ell learned piano at age 6, guitar at 8 and began writing songs at 10 before she followed in the footsteps of fellow Canadians Shania Twain and Terri Clark by making her musical trek to Nashville. The talented 26-year-old made her Grand Ole Opry debut this year, and her current single, "Shut Me Up," is climbing the charts. NCW chatted with Lindsay about perfect days, guitar players and spreading happiness.

MARIA DINOIA

.....

Would you rather go see a play or a musical?

I would say a musical. It always amazes me how the actors and actresses can be so talented at dancing and acting and singing.

What is a perfect day like for you?

Right now, the perfect day would be to stay home with my guitar and write all day because I've been traveling so much.

If you could speak another language, what would it be?

Growing up, I took seven years of French. Now I could only say a few words to save my life. I'd love to master it. We were in Paris last year and to be fully fluent was something I wanted to do so bad.

What's the best concert you've ever been to?

I'm pretty much the biggest John Mayer fan you're ever gonna meet. But I have to say I've seen Keith Urban perform a number of times



and he never disappoints. Every time, I just think there's no way he can top himself and every time he just does it! He's so dynamic and has audiences in the palm of his hand.

What's your favorite holiday?

Christmas. It's always such a warm time. I love Christmas music, getting together with family. Everything about the holiday is warm and celebrating people who love you.

If you could bring one fictional character to life, who would it be?

I'd have to say Tinkerbell. She just flies around, she's sweet and she spreads happiness and magic.

How many pairs of shoes do you own?

Shoes are my weakness. I probably own close to 30 pairs. Is that bad?

What was the last thing you recorded on TV?

I'm hugely into *Scandal*. I don't have a lot of time to watch TV, so Netflix and I have a really good relationship. But one show I watch religiously is *Scandal*.

If you came with a warning label, what would yours say?

It would probably say "could ignite at any second." I'm a spitfire and certain things fire me up and I take off like nobody's business.

NASH NEXT

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

RISING STAR
CAM'S JOURNEY
HAS BEEN
ANYTHING BUT
PREDICTABLE

Blazing Trails

BY GAYLE THOMPSON



inger/songwriter Cam pretty much already had her career planned out down to the last detail, when fate stepped in and changed everything.

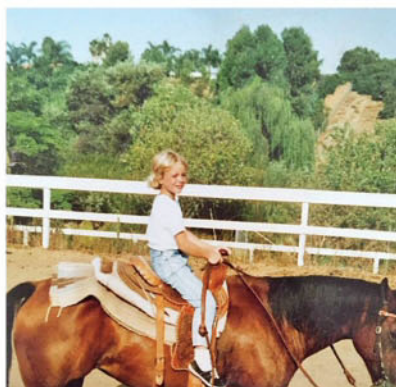
The California native's second single, "Burning House"—currently moving up the charts—took off after Cam performed a portion of the song on *The Bobby Bones Show*. It subsequently landed at No. 8 on iTunes and made her the top trending artist after the performance. The song, which appears on her EP, *Welcome to Cam Country*, was born from a relationship gone wrong in her own life. Some of the lines, including *I had a dream about a burning house / You were stuck inside / I couldn't get you out / I laid beside you and pulled you close / And the two of us went up in smoke*, are at least partly autobiographical.

"I was going to see a fellow that I had broken up with, and it didn't end very well," she recalls. "I was going to see him and I wanted to plan the conversation. So the night before, I was planning how I was going to have us be alone for a second at this party, to then be able to apologize. I had planned all the steps out. And that night, then I had all of that on my mind, so then I had the dream. That's kind of like what happens with music."

The song unexpectedly became a game-changer for the way Cam viewed her career. "I don't know why I'm surprised, but it just feels like that song always connects with people, whenever I play it," she says. "You can't not respond, because it's a mood-changer. It sort of brought back that romance of what music's all about, and that it's not just a full-blown industry and people are trying to churn it out and make their money and move on

to the next single. Nobody on our team is ever trying to do that, but you just are trying to work so hard to plan it out perfectly, this talk with this ex or this single release or your relationship. I think everybody falls into that sometimes, that routine, and then this was just such a moment of, 'Oh, we kind of fell in love on accident.' I'm shocked."

Much the way "Burning House"



(From top) Cam riding a horse as a kid in California; with radio host Bobby Bones; in the studio working on her debut EP, *Welcome to Cam Country*.

had its surprising launch, the rest of Cam's career hasn't exactly gone according to her careful planning.

"I've had the album done," Cam tells *Nash Country Weekly*. "I'm sort of a backwards model. Everything has been organic. I came to town wanting to be a songwriter, because I thought that was a safer bet for some reason. And then I realized, if I'm going to gamble so much—because being a songwriter is extremely hard, too—if I'm going to gamble so much, I might as well do what I want to do: sing the songs, make the music."

Cam launched a Kickstarter crowd-funding campaign, rallying her friends and fans to raise money to make her own record. "With my close friends, all of us with not much to our name, we decided to try to make an album, and get it as close as we could with the amount of money we had. One of my really good friends, his mentor, producer Jeff Bhasker, heard it and was like, 'Oh my gosh. Amazing. I want to be involved. I want to champion this.' So he sort of helped polish what we had built. And then we took it to my label."

Jeff, whose impressive résumé includes working with Kanye West, Jay-Z, Pink, Eminem, fun., and Taylor Swift, might seem an unlikely champion for an aspiring young country artist, but to Cam, there wasn't anyone better. "Tyler Johnson is my main co-writer, producer and roommate at different times," she explains. "He became a signed producer [with] Jeff Bhasker in Los Angeles. So he was working with him, and Jeff would weigh in on stuff from time to time. He'd hear a song and say, 'You might need to work on this.' I looked up to him so much because he's the one who did Bruno Mars, and the last Taylor Swift album [*Red*], and all this amazing music that you look up to. So he had the power to totally call you out when



**“WHEN I GREW UP, I WASN’T
SUPER-COOL. I LISTENED TO
THE OLD STUFF.”**



you think you're really good and say, 'No, you have to get better.'"

Friendly connection aside, Cam knew Jeff wouldn't hesitate to tell her what he thought, even if it wasn't what she wanted to hear. "I went into that meeting, and he actually the day before had told a famous movie star actress who was trying to do music, to her face, 'I'm not going to be involved.' He's a very honest person. I flew out there thinking, 'Oh my gosh, I'm going to get ripped a new one again. Here we go.' And then I went in, and he just loved every song."

Among those she played was "Burning House," which at the time wasn't even finished. "The verse is very plain storytelling," Cam says. "And Jeff's like, 'This is amazing. I know what you should do to the chorus.' So we went in and we wrote the chorus and pre-chorus with him and finished that song. It was another organic thing. It was so nice that he had seen where we came from, how we had grown, and then wanted to just see this music through to the next step. He's now just so important to me, on a personal level and on a business level. He's such a great heart. Once we get people like Jeff, we get our claws in them. It's so fun."

Even though she has wrapped up recording her forthcoming album, Cam says she still can't quite explain the finished product. "It's hard to do," she concedes. "It's really hard to do. It's not overproduced. There's a lot of space, and there's a lot of drive to the music, and then there's just this country storytelling. It's very colorful. It's like an adventure. Like you go on it, and it doesn't sound like anyone else right now, so when you're in, you're in, and you're going to love the whole thing. But you have to be ready and open, because 'Burning House,' it doesn't sound . . . I was thinking about this the other day. When you watch a new comedian,

Burn, Baby, Burn

Cam's new single, "Burning House," isn't the first song with "Burn" in the title to heat up the country airwaves. Check out these five sizzling songs.

"BURNIN' IT DOWN"
Jason Aldean

"CRASH AND BURN"
Thomas Rhett

"PICTURE TO BURN"
Taylor Swift

"BURNIN' MOONLIGHT"
Toby Keith

"BY THE LIGHT OF A BURNING BRIDGE"
George Strait

or a new show, and at first you're like, 'I don't know what this is,' and then you get into it, and you see what the rhythm and the pace of it is. But when you first encounter it, it's hard, because you want to hear things that are familiar. So it's definitely a new sound."

A new sound, perhaps born from decades of music that shaped Cam's unique style. "When I grew up, I wasn't super-cool," Cam acknowledges. "I listened to the old stuff. My parents listened to rock and also folk, and more '70s-influenced stuff. And then my grandparents listened to '30s, '40s music and some '50s music. So I got a lot of oldies classic stuff, and a mix of country and big band. All kinds of stuff."

"I was never on trend, or on point, with what was fully going on," she adds. "All those things just helped influence my music, along with the earliest things I listened

to. I think for a writer, you have an ear for what you think is a familiar structure, and I think that's a really fun thing to play with. In country music, a lot of times, the emotion you're trying to get after is familiar, or like home, or something that pulls you away from familiar, and then it makes you feel longing or heartbreak."

As Cam prepares to release her full-length album on Arista Nashville, tentatively scheduled for early 2016, she is paying close attention to the ongoing dialogue about the lack of females on country radio right now. But instead of the chatter serving as a deterrent, Cam says it only makes her even more determined than ever to make her voice heard.

"I think there's a lot to that conversation," she says. "There's a lot of layers. There's been lots of different times when it's been hard, because whatever reason that it's difficult to get your music on the radio, whether it's because you're a girl, because the industry's moving in a different direction or whatever, the main thing that it does is, it sets the bar so much higher, and the window you have is so much smaller, so you have to work a lot harder."

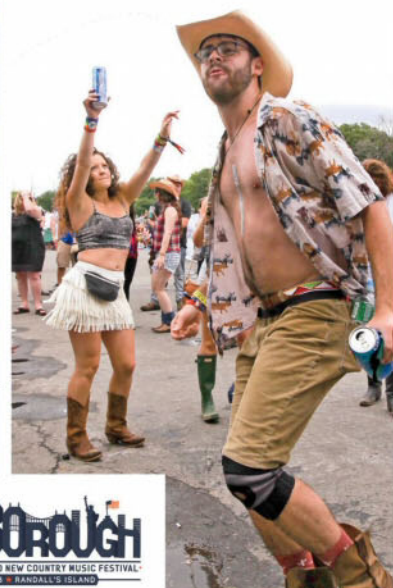
"Which, it's a bummer, because I would love to just sit on the couch, but it demands that your music is something that cannot be ignored," she continues. "That's how good you have to be, and that's why I think the few women that are breaking through right now are doing really interesting things. And that's this blessing in disguise. Not that I'm saying keep that window really small for so long, but people that are musicians at heart would never give up anyway, and they are just going to make better and better music, regardless. And I think if it was super-easy to get in, some of us might take the easy route."

In Cam's case, that would probably just be too predictable. ■

GETTIN' DOWN AT THE FARM

New York's new music festival proved that the Empire State knows a thing or two about country living.

BY ASHLEY EICHER



FARMBOROUGH
NEW YORK CITY'S BRAND NEW COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL
JUNE 26-28 • RANDALL'S ISLAND

Luke Bryan



If there was ever any doubt that country music is alive and well in New York City, all of those fears were put to rest June 26–28 as 40,000 fans descended upon New York's Randall's Island for FarmBorough, the city's first-ever country music festival.

The three-day, two-stage nonstop party, headlined by Dierks Bentley, Brad Paisley and Luke Bryan, kicked off by taking over Central Park on Friday morning for *Good Morning America's* Summer Concert Series, with a performance by Dierks and guests Kip Moore, Maddie & Tae and Canaan Smith.

"I love New York and I love playing here," said Dierks. "There are

so many country fans in New York and it just feels like there is so much electricity in the city. I think the fans are really excited to have a festival in their own backyard. I'm ready to party and I know they are, too."

"It's historic," said Tae Dye of Maddie & Tae. "It's the first time country music has made a mark festivalwise in New York City. We are just thrilled to be a part of it."

Maddie & Tae, RaeLynn, Canaan, Joe Nichols and Kip performed on the main stage throughout the day on Friday, while The Cadillac Three, Chris Stapleton and Jon Pardi took over the Next From Nashville stage. The Next From

Nashville stage showcased some of country music's most promising up-and-coming artists throughout the weekend.

A man of his word, Dierks rocked his 90-minute set that night with hits like "Drunk on a Plane" and "What Was I Thinkin'"—squeezing in a beer-chugging contest with a fan—as well as a cover of Taylor Swift's "Welcome to New York." In the spirit of collaboration, a theme that would continue throughout the weekend, Kip joined Dierks for "Lot of Leavin' Left to Do," while Maddie & Tae and Canaan hopped onto the stage for "Free and Easy (Down the Road I Go)."

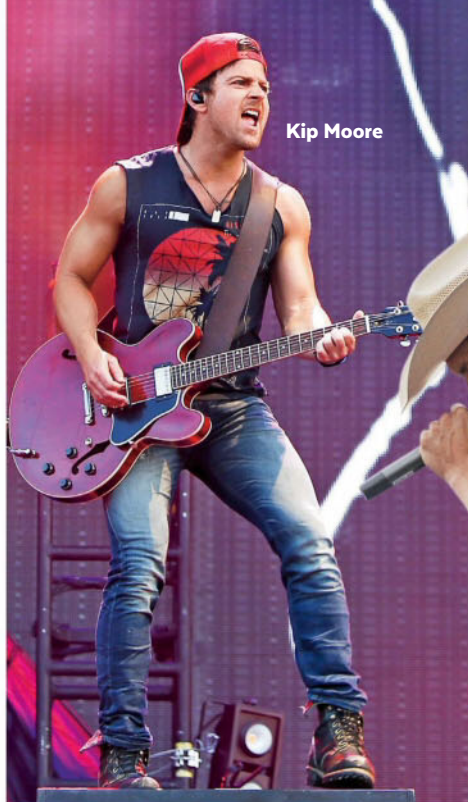
But it wasn't just the artists that

Luke & Dustin by Splash News/Corbis; M & T by Rick Davis/Corbis; Canaan, fans, Brad, RaeLynn & Kip by Debby Wong/Corbis

Fans in New York didn't let a little rain keep them from having fun at FarmBorough.



Canaan Smith



Kip Moore



Dustin Lynch



RaeLynn



Maddie & Tae



Brad Paisley

were excited for the weekend. The fans were ready, too.

"I thought I was the only country music fan in NYC until FarmBorough," fan Meghan Dorman told us right before taking a trip down the giant inflatable slide, one of the many activities offered at the festival throughout the weekend. "I love getting to see my favorite artists while being able to check out artists that I wouldn't have been exposed to otherwise. It feels like there is something for everyone. And did you try the chickpea hummus wraps or the burgers with ramen noodles as buns? The food is amazing."

The festival was in full swing by

Saturday with a burger cook-off at the Budweiser Bud & Burger's Championship and an epic beer pong competition complete with oversize Solo cups in the Pepsi tent. As thunderstorms rolled in, thousands of fans refused to leave, while artists like Mickey Guyton, Brandy Clark, Justin Moore, Dwight Yoakam, Striking Matches and Sturgill Simpson performed.

"New York is such a fun place to play," said Brandy. "The people here are just ravenous for country music."

Mickey, who wouldn't let a broken down bus on the way to FarmBorough put a damper on the day, happily agreed. "Even in the rain," she said, "people are standing out

there waiting to hear great music. It has been amazing."

By the time Brad took the stage, sheets of rain were pouring down on the field and stage, but the fans didn't care, and neither did he. Brad jokingly told the crowd, "What's really nice is I had to be here. You didn't. You know, in the rest of the country there's this thing going on called summer. It's really cool."

Complete with a bar onstage from which select fans could watch the show, Brad proved that the party wasn't going to stop for a little bit of rain. Hits like "Perfect Storm," "Mud on the Tires" and "Alcohol" provided an all-out singalong for the entirety



Chris Stapleton



Cassadee Pope



Courtney Cole



Randy Houser



Dierks Bentley



Dwight Yoakam

of his set. Mickey joined Brad for a hauntingly beautiful rendition of “Whiskey Lullaby.”

By Sunday the rain had cleared, giving fans the opportunity to enjoy the festival’s multiple onsite activities, like the Skyhawk Swing, while Cassadee Pope, Lindsay Ell, Randy Houser, Dustin Lynch others took the stage.

Dustin jokingly told us that Luke and Randy were hazing him with shots of tequila onstage and that Luke’s nickname for him on the Kick the Dust Up Tour is “pledge.”

“I can’t believe this is New York’s first country music festival,” said Dustin. “It’s so incredible to be a part of. You know there is a pool backstage? Surely I won’t end up in the pool tonight, right?”

With a hit-filled set that included

“I Don’t Want This Night to End” and “Country Girl (Shake It for Me),” Luke closed out the weekend and had everyone on their feet, shaking their hips and singing every word to every song.

“It is really fun bringing country to the city like this,” Luke said. “I’m honored to close it out. This is my fifth show in a row, so we’ve had a busy week, but I wouldn’t want to close it out anywhere else. The vibe backstage is really fun and we are just ready to have a great time.”

He took shots of tequila with Randy and Dustin before the three of them covered Maroon 5’s “Sugar” and performed on top of a truck that he brought onto the stage for “That’s My Kind of Night.” Arguably the most moving moment

of the weekend came when Luke brought out two fans carrying American flags and led the crowd in “The Star-Spangled Banner” before the entire crowd erupted in applause, chanting, “U.S.A.”

FarmBorough closed with a massive fireworks display and left attendees wanting to relive the weekend over and over again.

“I grew up in the South and have been to music festivals before, but none that featured country music,” said fan Stephanie Martucci. “FarmBorough brought the Southern girl out in me. I live in New York and this festival is officially my favorite way to enjoy country music now. It’s seamlessly combined my two favorite places into one. What could be better than that?” **NCW**

Dierks & Dwight by Debby Wong/Corbis; Chris & Courtney by Rahav Segev/Corbis; Randy & Cassadee by Splash News/Corbis

Nothing Sparkles Like Forever Love

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Over 1.5 carats
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*A Remarkable Value...
Available for a Limited Time*

Complete with a presentation case and Certificate of Authenticity, this hand-crafted ring is a superb value at \$99*, payable in 4 easy installments of \$24.75. To reserve yours, backed by our unconditional 120-day guarantee, send no money now; just mail the Reservation Application today!

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Reservations will be accepted on a
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Respond as soon as possible to
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SATISFACTION GUARANTEED
To assure a proper fit, a ring sizer will
be sent to you after your reservation
has been accepted.

*Plus \$9.98 shipping and service.
Please allow 4-6 weeks after
initial payment for shipment
of your jewelry. Sales subject
to product availability and order
acceptance.

RESERVATION APPLICATION SEND NO MONEY NOW



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YES. Please reserve the "Endless" White Topaz Eternity Ring
for me as described in this announcement, with the names indicated
below. Ring size _____ (if known)

Maximum of 10 characters per name

Name #1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Name #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Mrs. Mr. Ms.

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address

City

State

Zip

E-Mail (Optional)



THIS TIME AROUND

RONNIE DUNN
treads the line between
contemporary and
traditional with his first
single for Nash Icon Music.

STORY BY JON FREEMAN

In this stretch of his post-Brooks & Dunn recording career, Ronnie Dunn is getting a second chance to be a new artist.

Today the golden-throated singer is making the rounds with radio and print as part of his new agreement with Nash Icon Music, the label-radio partnership between Cumulus (*Nash Country Weekly*'s parent company) and the powerful Big Machine Label Group. That deal was officially announced back in January 2015—after Ronnie teased it in October—and his first single, “Ain’t No Trucks in Texas,” debuted

on *America’s Morning Show* in July.

“I feel real fortunate to be involved at this stage of the game in a radio push, or an exposure push at this level,” says Ronnie, settling his



lanky frame into a conference room chair at Nash headquarters. He recently wrapped up an ecstatically praised series of shows (see sidebar) with Kix Brooks and Reba McEntire at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, which will resume in December. But for this summer he’s focused on promoting his new music.

Written by ace composers Wendell Mobley, Neil Thrasher and Tony Martin, “Ain’t No Trucks” patiently lays out a narrative by appearing to contradict a set of generally accepted truths (Memphis and the blues, football and the South). The picture begins to form when he reaches a line about there being no bourbon in



Ronnie still finds a thrill from being onstage; (below left) in the studio with co-producer Jay DeMarcus of Rascal Flatts; (below) at the ACM Awards in 2010



RONNIE DUNN CONTINUED

Kentucky, which he follows with *and I ain't drinkin' me some now*.

"I think they sat down and thought about it," Ronnie says with a knowing laugh. "Sometimes you stumble into it, and they may have. Who knows? But that's a good sign, to be able to pull one off like that."

"Ain't No Trucks in Texas" works on a level similar to George Strait's beloved "Ocean Front Property": it's all a front for the brokenhearted guy at the center of the storm—a not-so-

carefully constructed façade to conceal his real feelings.

"I like the nature of this song for that reason. It is an interesting twist," says Ronnie. "I just pick them as a writer and a fan of music. Out of all the thousand songs that I listened to, and a lot of the songs that I'm writing right now, this one just stuck its head up."

The character in the song is a complex one—clearly devastated, but too stubborn or prideful to come right out and say it. You can trace

that kind of pathos back to Brooks & Dunn singles like "You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone" and "That Ain't No Way to Go," which show off Ronnie's emotional range as a singer.

"You try to mix it up, but yeah, I am drawn," he says. "For the most part, no matter what it is, it could be a really vaguely written song in terms of lyrics and stuff, if it just trips that trigger, then I'm in. It's kind of an innate thing, that sense that you use to gravitate to it. It's not that scientific or manipulated. It's just cool when

Ronnie perf & Ronnie with Jay by Dustin Haney/BMG; Kix & Ronnie by Jeffrey R. Saab/CBS; Kix & Ronnie by Justin Meinstach/Casars Ent.

STRIP SEARCH

In June and July, Ronnie reunited with longtime duo partner Kix Brooks and friend Reba McEntire for a series of special shows at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas called *Together in Vegas*. Ronnie notes he was floored by the sound quality and the visual spectacle cooked up by the production team to highlight their many hits.

"It was one of the most fun experiences I've ever had in this business," he says. "The sound in the room, it feels better than being in the studio. Of course, we can't see the production behind us, so one day they recorded a full rehearsal—a real-time dress rehearsal—and let us go out into the audience and see the lights and everything that was involved with the stage moves. It was unreal."

Witnessing that footage of them had a profound effect on all three, particularly Reba.

"Cowgirls Don't Cry" came up, and there's a hundred-foot video screen out there, hi-def, and the way the guys had used it for the production is amazing," he says. "The content came up with the musical background and I saw her put her hand over her face, and she started crying. Her father had just passed away not long ago, and [the song is] written a lot about her. She just looked up after it got through and goes, 'That's wrong! That's wrong!'"



Having the shows all in one place also helped to streamline the production, ensuring that kinks experienced by artists traveling city to city were minimal.

"There's a convenient routine, once it's put up," Ronnie agrees. "Obviously, the construction of what they did and all the stuff they did onstage with it was excruciatingly detailed. But once it's up, we play Wednesdays, you're off Thursday, play Friday and Saturday. In the meantime, it's almost embarrassing: you have a massive suite to yourself on a private floor with a butler."

Reba, Brooks & Dunn: *Together in Vegas* returns to the famed Strip on Dec. 2.

they show up like this."

Ronnie worked with longtime friend (and Rascal Flatts bassist) Jay DeMarcus to record "Ain't No Trucks," at the suggestion of the label's A&R head, Allison Jones. Beyond that, he was pretty much left to his own devices for recording his album.

"They're good about going, 'Just work with who you're comfortable with,'" Ronnie explains. "But I'm really enjoying working with Jay right now. He's new, he's fresh. I like that perspective. I like the chemistry. And I really like this song. If this is an indication of where he's headed, I'm liking it."

There's a balancing act at play with "Ain't No Trucks" as well, surrounding Ronnie's familiar voice with decidedly contemporary production. As part of the agreement with Nash Icon, Ronnie needs to be able to produce some radio-friendly singles. In 2015 that means something entirely different than when "My Maria" became a smash for Brooks & Dunn nearly 20 years ago.

"That's something you have to work with all the time," he says. "I've gone through stages over the last 20-plus years, where I thought 'My Maria' was way too contemporary at the time. I remember feeling alone. I was hesitant to do it onstage, live. Now you can't do a show without it. I feel like I can't push the threshold too much, nor am I inclined to do that. You have to thread the needle here these days, for various reasons."

He declines to elaborate on that statement, but one reason could be his well-publicized feud with country radio from a couple years back. As a solo artist free from his major-label obligations, Ronnie released *Peace, Love and Country Music* as a digital product and met with resistance. He took to Facebook to voice his frustration about the label-radio relationship, but something changed in his attitude between then and now.

"I jumped out and tried to . . . just go totally Internet and independent and buck the system there," he says. "I learned real quick that it takes

everybody. It takes everybody. You can't do it on your own."

Another reason may just be the continually evolving sound of country radio, which has gradually shifted closer to the aesthetic of pop radio in its latest iteration. Much has been made about how upset traditional country fans are about that, but Ronnie doesn't think the disagreement between those parties is anything new.

"I've never known it when that debate wasn't at the forefront," he remarks. "If you go back to the Grand Ole Opry, when someone added a drum. It's never gonna stop."

As "Ain't No Trucks" demonstrates, Ronnie is comfortable embracing what's happening now, secure in the knowledge that he will always know how to play something country.

"It's art. It can't just continue to sound the same," he says. "But you can't turn your back on what brought people to the dance in the first place."

Not a bad attitude for a new artist to have. **NCW**



THE BLAKE

**Together, the
pair was truly
unstoppable.**

EFFEC

Hearts were heavier than concrete overshoes when the first couple of country music, Blake Shelton and Miranda Lambert, decided to end their marriage after a four-year run. For many country fans, it was like a death in the family, because the two seemed so suited to each other. Wisecracking, devilish-looking Blake was the perfect complement to audacious fire-brand Miranda. Blake had become a national celebrity on *The Voice* while Miranda grew as a visible figure on talk and entertainment shows, as well as on the concert trail. They graced the covers of magazines, both together and separately. Fans felt as

if they knew them intimately.

And despite persistent tabloid rumors of unfaithfulness, they appeared oblivious to all the tongue-wagging. “Divorce is not an option,” Miranda famously declared to members of the media a couple years back.

But as the split was announced, the quotes read a bit differently. “This is not the future we envisioned,” the couple said in a statement to the Associated Press, tacking on the obligatory plea for privacy.

When you consider how each helped the other’s career, it was likely easy to envision a blissful future for the two. First rewind to about seven years ago and you’ll recall that Miranda was directly respon-

sible for Blake’s first major crossover hit. They were definitely an item at the time, though not yet married. She urged him to record a cover of the Michael Bublé pop hit “Home,” convincing the somewhat skeptical Blake that it would do wonders for his career. Miranda’s advice couldn’t have been any wiser. “Home” shot to No. 1 in July of 2008, but, more important, garnered an entirely new legion of fans for Blake.

Once they started being identified as a “couple,” it seemed more than mere coincidence that the awards and accolades followed. Blake copped his first Country Music Association award for Male Vocalist of the Year in 2010, just as the rela-

Blake by Brian Bowen Smith/NBC; Miranda courtesy Sony Music Nashville



AND MIRANDA

T What will their futures hold as they go their separate ways?

STORY BY NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY STAFF

tionship with Miranda grew stronger and talk of marriage began to surface. He's won the award every year since and has also added the 2012 Entertainer of the Year honor to his award mantel. Since coming on board the NBC hit show *The Voice* in 2011, the charismatic singer has parlayed that national exposure into true celebrity status.

Miranda, in turn, evolved into a keen interpreter of material that leaned toward a more reflective side. Early on, Miranda nabbed the distinction as master of the revenge motif, with hits like "Crazy Ex-Girlfriend" and "Gunpowder & Lead." Those tunes afforded her a certain image and musical edge while not exactly

endearing her to a broad audience.

But around a year before marrying Blake, Miranda began choosing more serious fare. "The House That Built Me," featuring a wonderfully wistful performance from Miranda, became her first No. 1 single in 2010. That same year, Miranda won her first of five straight Country Music Association awards for Female Vocalist of the Year. Her *Four the Record* album of 2011, the same year she married Blake, offered up a variety of material, from the playful "Mama's Broken Heart" to the message-oriented "All Kinds of Kinds," which addressed the issues of tolerance and acceptance.

Now the question becomes whether the split affects their chances at

this year's CMA Awards. Will the voters, comprised of industry and media professionals, go in other directions? Or will they treat the divorce simply as a personal matter between Blake and Miranda and still shower them with the awards? We'll find out in November.

If there's anything positive to glean, it might come in the form of fresh material. At a recent surprise show in Nashville, Miranda revealed that she's already started crafting new songs in the wake of the split. Blake will surely continue with his coaching/mentoring duties on *The Voice*.

But as for the long-term repercussions—well, as they say in television, stay tuned.

THE UNIVERSE OF BLAKE & MIRANDA

Together, the couple had a sizeable impact on country music, business and charity.



The Voice Supercluster

How many artists' careers will directly benefit from Blake's role as a coach on NBC's *The Voice*? So far, he's led three Team Blake members—**CASSADEE POPE**, **DANIELLE BRADBERRY** and **CRAIG WAYNE BOYD**—to victory and record deals in country music. Other Team Blake competitors, like **THE SWON BROTHERS**, **RAELYNN** and **GWEN SEBASTIAN**, ended up finding success in music in spite of not taking home the show's grand prize record deal. In Gwen Sebastian's case, she landed a gig as a backup singer on Blake and Miranda's tours while still making her own music. And when it comes to former *Steel Magnolia* member **MEGHAN LINSEY**, her second-place finish with Team Blake has helped relaunch her career as a pop/soul artist working outside country music.



Pizza Hut

His strange finger-pointing ad was the topic of much discussion, so there's a good chance this pizza player may cut him in on a slice of the action once again.

BLAKE SHELTON



Reba McEntire

Everyone's favorite country redhead was obviously a superstar long before Blake and Miranda were famous or an item, but she's also sort of like family to him. Starstruck Entertainment, which looks after her career, is also Blake's management company. Reba's stepson Brandon Blackstock—husband of Kelly Clarkson—is Blake's manager.



Pepsi

Blake's offbeat sense of humor proved to be a perfect fit for this irreverent cola brand.



RaeLynn

This spunky Texan was on Team Blake during Season 2 of *The Voice* and made enough of an impression to land herself a record deal in spite of being eliminated before the finals. She added one of the signature moments in Blake's "Boys 'Round Here," the *mhmm, that's right*, just before the first chorus. Her song "God Made Girls" hit No. 7, and currently she's playing some dates with Miranda.



MIRANDA LAMBERT

Ashley Monroe

Miranda's Pistol Annies band mate has just released her stunning new album, *The Blade*, a follow-up to her acclaimed album *Like a Rose*. She also sang with Blake on his single "Lonely Tonight" and he officiated her wedding to MLB pitcher John Danks, while Miranda was a bridesmaid.



Angaleena Presley

Also a member of Pistol Annies, Angaleena showed just how much the Annies owed to her sound when she put out her solo album *American Middle Class* in 2014. Typically, it wrestled with class and gender in a way that few other albums had, a trait that was present in many Annies tunes.



The Ladysmith

In Tishomingo, where Miranda lived until the divorce, she also started a funky, eight-room bed-and-breakfast in an old building downtown. Each room boasts its own unique décor, selected by Miranda herself.



Kacey Musgraves

Though Kacey was well on her way to fame at the time, Miranda is still responsible for recording Kacey's only No. 1 song, "Mama's Broken Heart." At her own wedding, Miranda asked fellow Texan Kacey if she could have the song to record. Kacey agreed, on the condition that she could sing backup. So far, it's the only time they've ever collaborated.



Ram Trucks

Miranda scored a heavy-duty brand partnership when she aligned with this revered truck company.

Natalie Hemby

Natalie's songwriting partnership with Miranda has been a fruitful one indeed, yielding the hits "White Liar," "Only Prettier," "Baggage Claim" and "Automatic." But what's more, Natalie later co-wrote massive hits like Little Big Town's "Pontoon" and Lady Antebellum's "Downtown" as she started having success with Miranda.



The Pink Pistol

Miranda is now proprietor of two Pink Pistol boutiques—one in Oklahoma and one in Texas—which sell a variety of clothes, gifts and other knickknacks.



The Philanthropy Cluster

Miranda's well-documented love of rescue dogs turned into a crusade with MuttNation Foundation, which aims to end animal cruelty, neglect and homelessness. And in yet another philanthropic gesture, Miranda recently started the Women Creators Fund at Belmont University. The fund will provide financial assistance to a female student majoring in music business, songwriting or entertainment industry studies.



COUNTRY MUSIC CAMELOT CRUMBLES

As devastating as it had to have been for Blake and Miranda to call it quits, their fans were thrown into a tail-spin when the news of their divorce became public. We all fell in love with the country couple, especially when Blake released the video for "God Gave Me You" and it opened with a sweet pre-wedding message from his then bride-to-be. Through every step of their married life, they welcomed their fans in, proving they were just normal country folks—working in the yard, taking care of their animals, going for Sunday drives in the country, cooking dinner and just watching TV when they were home together. Perhaps that's why fans connected to the couple and why their hearts were shattered by the breakup.



Emily Stewart
@em_marlee

It breaks my heart that Miranda and Blake are getting divorced

RETWEETS
2

FAVORITES
7



9:35 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Jianna Colello
@jianna_colello

I feel like if Blake and Miranda can't get through their relationship then I might as well not even bother trying

RETWEET

FAVORITE



Michelle Whelan
@Chell_Whelan

If it's true Blake and Miranda are getting divorced, the little hope that I had for love to exist has totally vanished.

RETWEETS

FAVORITES



4:42 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Kase Doner
@kasedoner

Dear radio stations please don't play Blake and Miranda back to back, it's just too painful rn

RETWEETS

FAVORITES



3:12 PM - 25 Jul 2015

gracie combs
@gracie_combs12

hearing that blake and miranda got a divorce is probably the saddest news ive ever heard

FAVORITES

7

8:08 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Kassie
@ktotheassie

I'm way more upset about Miranda and Blake Shelton's split than any of my own previous break-ups 💔

RETWEET

FAVORITES



9:32 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Alivia Olinger
@Alivias_

not one to be concerned with celebrities but Blake and Miranda 💔

FAVORITES

2

3:49 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Obsessed with BS ML
@ChristyThompson9

I keep thinking this is a bad nightmare and I'm going to wake up and everything is fine.

RETWEETS

FAVORITES



11:40 AM - 20 Jul 2015

meg
@meganpopovich_4

im actually so freakin mad that miranda lambert and blake shelton got a divorce ngl

RETWEETS

FAVORITES



9:35 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Kendra Sisson
@kendralizzy

Blake Shelton and Miranda Lambert getting divorced makes me lose faith in love.

FAVORITES

2

8:19 PM - 25 Jul 2015

Shelton Daily
@SheltonDaily

"We don't have to be lonely tonight. Need you, want you, I'm right here..." I dedicate this song to @blakeshelton and @mirandalambert lol

RETWEETS

FAVORITES



Obsessed with BS ML
@ChristyThompson9

My birthday is in 2 days so can I have my present be Blake and Ran back together???

FAVORITES

3

12:12 PM - 4 Aug 2015

periwinkle crosser.
@kaycrosser

You know you're drunk when you start crying during "mine would be you" about blake and miranda divorcing 🥺🥺

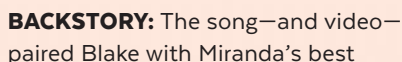
FAVORITES

2

“You’re the Reason God Made Oklahoma” ▶

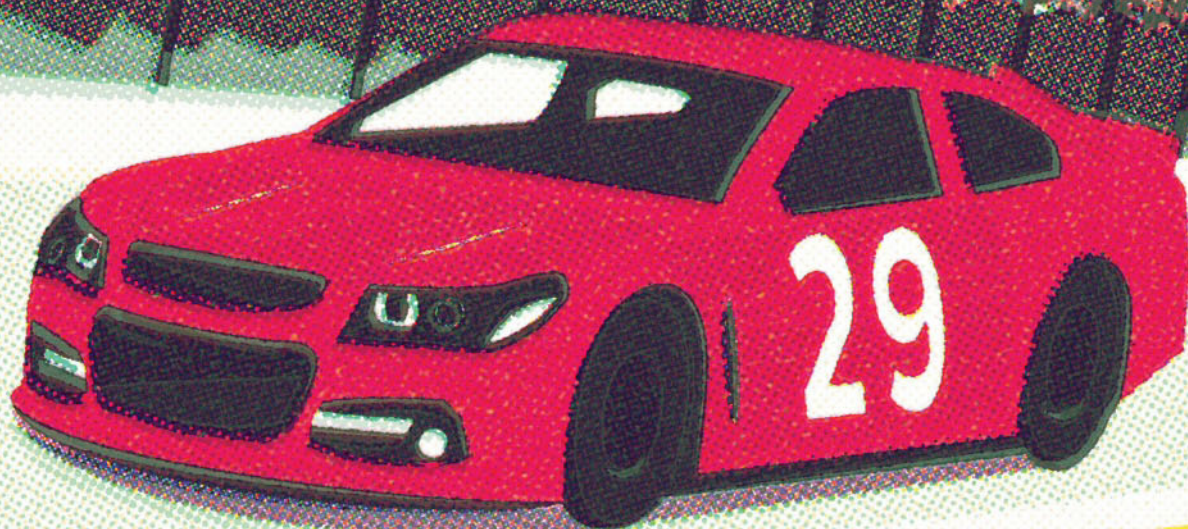
WHAT WE LEARNED: Some women still prefer mullet-wearing men.

BACKSTORY: Blake heard the Dave Barnes contemporary Christian tune on the radio while driving back to Oklahoma and almost had to pull over. He was so moved by “God Gave Me You” that it inspired him to propose to Miranda. Blake recorded the song on his *Red River Blue* album, and the tune became a *Billboard* No. 1 hit and earned a Grammy nomination, while



BACKSTORY: Miranda recorded the spitfire of a song for 2014's *Platinum* and it became a Top 5 hit in 2015. The song's saucy music video shows Miranda sporting a "Mrs. Shelton" leather belt as she saunters past the shirtless pool boy on the way to her platinum Airstream trailer. The belt, made by Double J Saddlery, was also on display at her wedding in 2011.

WHAT WE LEARNED: Don't believe everything you read on belts. **NCW**



CRASHIN' THE PARTY

REMEMBER WHEN THESE NASCAR DRIVERS SPED THROUGH SOME OF COUNTRY'S HOTTEST VIDEOS?

COUNTRY MUSIC AND NASCAR have been in a long-term relationship since, well, forever. From well before country star MARTY ROBBINS was lapping the track between shows to, more recently, CHASE RICE working with Hendrick Motorsports in both the shop and on pit crews for RYAN NEWMAN, MICHAEL McDOWELL and JIMMIE JOHNSON. Even in the late '80s, several drivers, including KYLE PETTY, DALE EARNHARDT and RUSTY WALLACE, released an actual album called *Stock Car Racing's Entertainers of the Year*. But in our opinion, the relationship between racing and Wranglers is best seen and most appreciated when NASCAR drivers crash country music videos—sometimes in cameo appearances, but sometimes in full-fledged roles. We've made a list of our favorites. Do you remember these?



"REAL LIFE"

With 30 career NASCAR Sprint Cup wins, **KEVIN HARVICK** is certainly a racing celeb, but he kept it real in **JAKE OWEN**'s latest video—even if he was more than slightly upstaged by Jake's mom.



"ANYWHERE BUT HERE"

When you have to get there fast, why wouldn't you hitch a ride with NASCAR legend **MARK MARTIN**, as **SAMMY KERSHAW** did in this early 1992 classic?



"WORKIN' FOR A LIVIN'"

Shot at Atlanta Motor Speedway, **GARTH BROOKS** and **HUEY LEWIS** spend the duration of this video, not pushing and shoving, but dodging and ducking a full field of drivers.



"OLD ALABAMA"

BRAD PAISLEY's doppelgänger, **JEFF GORDON**, wasn't the only NASCAR hotshot in this video. The legendary "D-Dubya," **DARRELL WALTRIP**, also appears, although in a less than speedy mode of transportation.



"HONKY TONK TRUTH"

The resemblance was too uncanny for **BROOKS & DUNN** to resist the urge to play "Will the real **KIX BROOKS** please stand up" with the late **DALE EARNHARDT SR.** in this fun video.



"BAIT A HOOK"



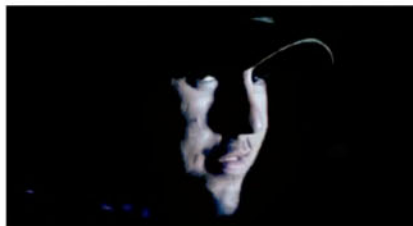
"SLOW ME DOWN"

We already knew Joe Gibbs Racing driver **CARL EDWARDS** could handle the fast track . . . and throw an impressive back flip off the roof of his car in the infield, but he proved he's got some acting chops, too, in these videos with **JUSTIN MOORE** and **SARA EVANS**.



"FASTEST GIRL IN TOWN"

Well, duh! **MIRANDA LAMBERT** really wanted the fastest girl in town and the hottest woman in NASCAR in her video, so who else besides Stewart-Haas Racing driver **DANICA PATRICK** could fit the bill?



"OL' RED"



"SOME BEACH"

BLAKE SHELTON could have done a lot worse than to get the handsome driver of the No. 1 Ford Mustang, **ELLIOT SADLER**, in his video for "Ol' Red," so it wasn't a big surprise that he asked his new pal to join him for "Some Beach," too.



"ROUGH & READY"

If **TRACE ADKINS** was going to mention having an Earnhardt sticker on his car, then he needed to get the real deal, in the form of **DALE EARNHARDT JR.**, to appear in his video. And so he did, but only for a second.



"WHO'S CHEATIN' WHO"

This **ALAN JACKSON** classic is more like a who's who of NASCAR in the late '90s, with cameos from **DALE JARRETT**, **MARK MARTIN**, **BILL ELLIOT**, **ERNIE IRVAN**, **RUSTY WALLACE**, **JOHN ANDRETTI**, **JEREMY MAYFIELD** and **KENNY IRWIN JR.** Oh, and a special appearance by the Bigfoot monster truck.

COLOR HIS WORLD

MULTITALENTED RONNIE
MCDOWELL MAKES A SPLASH WITH
HIS PAINTINGS AS HE RELEASES A
LOVE-ONE-ANOTHER SINGLE.

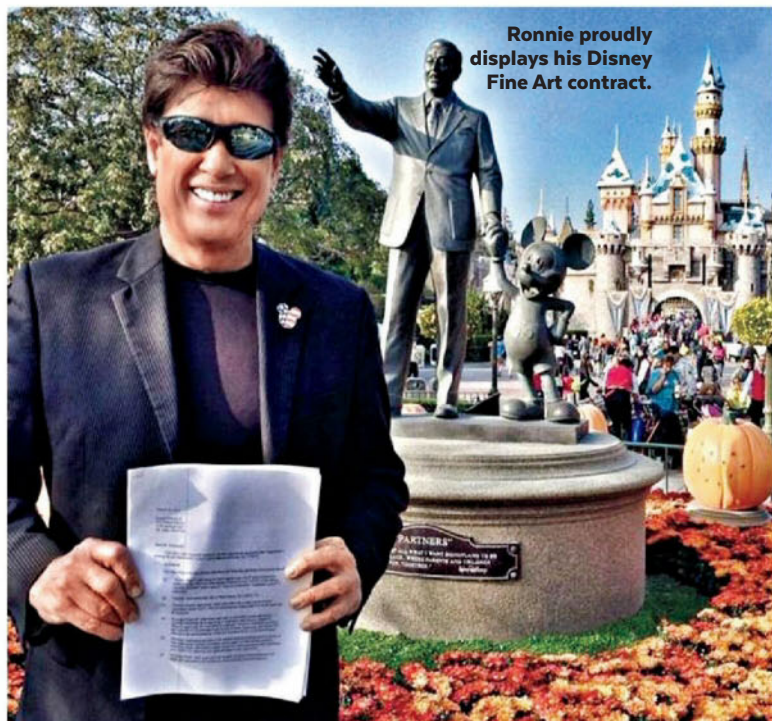
BY BOB PAXMAN



Ronnie painted this picture for fellow Elvis fan Dolly Parton.



Ronnie proudly displays his Disney Fine Art contract.



Ronnie McDowell didn't quarterback a Super Bowl victory or win some nationwide clearinghouse contest. But he can declare, "I'm going to Disney World!" in a manner of speaking. In fact, he'll be going on the five-year plan.

Ronnie, a gifted painter along with being an accomplished singer/songwriter, recently signed a five-year deal with Disney Fine Art in recognition of his original artwork. Ronnie's paintings of Disney characters will soon be seen in Disney parks and galleries all over the globe, as well as on Disney Cruise Lines.

Anyone who's ever put brush to canvas can appreciate the magnitude of this dream gig. For decades, aspiring artists, animators and painters have tried to ingratiate themselves into the magical Disney corporation, without much luck. From his publicist's office in Nashville, Ronnie sat down to explain how he broke through the often complex Disney machine, with a little prompting from his children.

"My kids are definitely involved in this," Ronnie says in his deliberate Southern accent, a by-product



of his Portland, Tenn., upbringing. "About two years ago, my youngest daughter, Athena, called and told me I should do some Disney paintings. She knows that I have always been fascinated with Walt Disney and the classic Disney movies."

Obviously, it's one thing to be a fan, and quite another to have one's work accepted by the masters of popular art and animation. "I told her that, first of all, you've got to have an idea that's out of this world, because Disney has probably seen everything," Ronnie continues. "But, actually, they haven't. There are an infinite number of ideas. My son Tyler was listening in on the conversation, and

he says, 'I've got the idea.' He said we should do a painting of Walt Disney getting on the California Limited train in 1923 from Kansas City to go to California. He knew the whole story of how Walt Disney raised enough money to buy a first-class ticket to go to Hollywood, and borrowed a suit and everything."

Ronnie envisioned a scenario with Walt boarding the train, with Mickey Mouse in front of him, from Union Station in Kansas City at 8 o'clock in the morning. "It took me a long time to finish it," Ronnie says. "It was called *The Journey Begins*. My oldest son, Ronnie Dean, gave me another idea of Elvis Presley teaching Mickey Mouse how to dance [on television]. I painted that also. My daughter took a photo of the paintings and sent it to Disney Fine Art. About two weeks later," Ronnie adds, still amazed by the turn of events, "Disney called and said that we've got a five-year contract."

Since that time, Ronnie has been busy with the brushes, putting the finishing touches on a new piece called *The Arrival*. The concept, if you haven't surmised, depicts young Walt Disney arriving in Hollywood,



The Indian Lake Children's Choir of Hendersonville, Tenn., sings on Ronnie's new single.



Ronnie has often performed with The Jordanares and former Elvis Presley sidemen D.J. Fontana (back left) and Scotty Moore (back right).



ready to stake his claim to fame and possible fortunes. “I did the Alfred Hitchcock thing,” Ronnie says, laughing. “I put myself in the picture. I’m reading the newspaper, kind of in the background.”

The Disney assignment would appear to put his schedule on overload, but Ronnie still finds time to write songs and keep his tour commitments. He recently recorded a new song, “Red, Yellow, Black and White,” delivering a message of love and cooperation among all races and cultures. In light of recent events, Ronnie feels that the anthem couldn’t be timelier.

“There have been a lot of things in the news lately, and it’s something that I just don’t understand,” he says, shifting into serious mode. “Why can’t we all just live and let live? After thousands of years, we still haven’t figured out that we need to love one another. Let’s all just get along. That’s the message the song conveys.” Ronnie has also made a video for the song, featuring a multi-ethnic cast of schoolchildren, directed by his son Tyler. “They were

all local kids from Hendersonville, Tennessee, where I live now, and my hometown Portland,” Ronnie explains. “They were good singers and a few of them were real characters.”

Ronnie, a quite youthful-looking 65 and still sporting a thick mane of hair, is pushing toward his 40th year in music. He debuted on the charts in 1977 with his salute to Elvis Presley, “The King Is Gone,” written by Ronnie and Lee Morgan, which hit slightly less than a month after Elvis died. Even now, Ronnie and the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll remain intertwined. He can render a practically note-perfect impersonation of Elvis’ voice, right down to that little quiver, and will gladly share that Elvis was his most significant influence.

He had Elvis’ vocal style down so authentically that he was inked to provide the singing voice for the 1979 made-for TV biopic *Elvis*. The movie’s star, Kurt Russell, lip-synched Elvis’ hits to Ronnie’s vocals. Furthering the Elvis legacy, Ronnie often performs with Elvis’ former backup group, The Jordanares, and long-

time Elvis drummer D.J. Fontana, staging a tribute to the legend’s life and career.

“The King Is Gone” provided instant celebrity for Ronnie, as the song jumped onto the pop and country charts faster than one of Elvis’ hip gyrations. In less than a month, “The King Is Gone” had amassed a royal total of 1 million sales. Its slam-bang, out-of-the-gate success prompted a personal phone call from the influential impresario of rock, Dick Clark.

“I was backstage at a show in Louisiana,” Ronnie begins, “and there’s a phone call for me. They told me it was Dick Clark calling and I’m thinking, ‘Not *the* Dick Clark.’ But it was. He tells me that he’s sending a private plane to Baton Rouge after my show. And then he says, ‘You’re gonna be on *American Bandstand* tomorrow.’ And still, I’m thinking to myself, ‘Who is this really?’ I didn’t know what to think.”

Ronnie eventually convinced himself that the phone call was legit business. And when he arrived at the Baton Rouge airport, all was

“PEOPLE MAGAZINE NAMED [‘THE KING IS GONE’] THE WORST SONG OF THE YEAR. ISN’T THAT HOW IT ALWAYS GOES? SOMEBODY GETS SUCCESS RIGHT AWAY AND THEY HAVE TO TEAR YOU DOWN.”



Pop icons Mickey Mouse and Elvis dance in one of Ronnie's works. (Left) George Jones admires Ronnie's colorful depiction of him.

confirmed. “Sure enough, there was this Learjet waiting for me,” Ronnie recalls with a laugh. “I landed at the ABC lot in Los Angeles, where the show had moved to [from Philadelphia].” The following morning, Ronnie was shocked to discover one aspect of *Bandstand* that he had apparently misunderstood.

“I said something like it was a good thing that the artists lip-synched because I was pretty nervous,” Ronnie says. “But they told me that, no, I had to sing it live. Well, when that red light came on for me to sing, I can’t describe to you how scared I was. But when I saw the tapes of it, I looked like I was in total control.”

But while “The King Is Gone” caught on with fans, the mainstream music media did not share the enthusiasm. Record reviewers, for the most part, gave it a critical bludgeoning. “*People* magazine named it the worst song of the year,” Ronnie recalls, not terribly fondly. “Isn’t that how it always goes? Somebody gets success right away and they have to tear you down.”

All the ingredients were in place for “one-hit wonder” status—a new artist, a first song that became an international smash. How do you top that? Thankfully, Ronnie was able to maintain a solid country music career, with No. 1 hits “Older Women” in 1981 and “You’re Gonna Ruin My Bad Reputation” two years later. He scored an additional dozen Top 10 singles through the latter part of the 1980s.

The road still beckons, but mostly on weekends. “I do keep a good performing schedule,” Ronnie says. “I work on the weekends and stay home during the week.” He will concede that fans continue to request Elvis material, and he always obliges. “They still want me to do the Elvis stuff,” Ronnie says. “But they want to hear ‘Older Women’ and ‘Watchin’ Girls Go By’ and the other hits, too.”

He can’t seem to escape the shadow of musical legends, though. Just recently, Ronnie became linked to country music’s greatest singer, in the eyes of many: George Jones. Ronnie’s painting of George, famous-

ly riding atop his lawn mower to secure some alcohol, now sits inside the newly opened George Jones Museum in downtown Nashville. “It’s actually right over the actual lawn mower that’s in one of the displays,” Ronnie says, smiling. “George asked me to do that painting and that is one of my favorites.”

Again, Ronnie’s talent for vocal mimicry surfaces with a spot-on impression of Jones’ inimitable growl. “George called and said to me, ‘Ronnie, I want you to do me a painting of me getting a DUI on my lawn mower.’ As soon as he said that, I saw that painting in my head,” Ronnie relates. “When I finished it, I thought that it turned out exactly the way I saw it.”

Now, painting and music will fill his days well into the next decade. “I keep painting stuff,” he says, shifting about in his chair. “The Disney people want me to do a series, so I’m already working on the next one.” Smiling widely, Ronnie adds, “I’m blessed to have this and my music. I guess I’m going to be busy for a while.” **NCW**



JB & THE MOONSHINE BAND

ORIGIN

Tyler,
Texas



PRIME PICKS

"MIXTAPE"
"BLACK AND
WHITE"
"KISS ME
THAT WAY"

BIGGEST HIT
"PERFECT GIRL"

If you're one of the many fans of JB and the Moonshine Band, you have gotten used to their lighthearted approach to crafting a song lyric. On previous projects, like their self-titled debut and the follow-up, *Beer for Breakfast*, their track lists have skewed on the side of party anthems and tongue-in-cheek novelty numbers with brief glimpses into musical

observations about love and life.

But there was always something more. Something bubbling under the surface for lead singer JB Patterson and the Moonshine Band's Chris Flores (bass guitar), Gabe Guevara (drums) and Hayden McMullen (lead guitar). When it came time to hit the studio to record their third album, it was weighing heavily on their



MIX IT UP

To see the contributions that studio managers **SAMMY SERPENT** and **RICKY RODENT** made to *Mixtape*, check out the "MAKING MIXTAPE" YouTube videos. No, really, check 'em out.

(From left) Chris Flores, JB Patterson, Hayden McMullen and Gabe Guevara

minds. But in an effort to get music to their loyal following as quickly as possible, the Texas-based band took the Nashville route—at first.

"We needed to release a new album and I had written some songs, and management was like, 'Why don't you just do it the easy way? Come to Nashville, hire some players, knock it out and two weeks later, you have an album,'" JB explains. "I had a full plate and that sounded so good to me. And I was like, 'OK, that's what I'll do.' So, I went and I tried it and it sounded so good. Nashville play-

ers are just so amazing. The problem is, it didn't sound like us. And I had always said that I like what we do because we are all us and we play on it ourselves. It was hurting me to attempt it this other way, but all it did was prove that I was right from the get-go. So, I scrapped \$7,000 worth of production and we started over ourselves in our laboratory."

The "laboratory" is a 100-year-old cabin-turned-recording-studio that JB picked up for a song (not literally) from Craigslist. He and the band started fresh with the title track of

Mixtape as the post to which the rest of the album was pinned.

"When we came back and started recording, we recorded a bunch of songs," says JB. "We have lots of songs. We have so many, we have songs that will never be heard. And I started thinking, 'What would it be like if, instead of trying to make this stylistically cohesive from start to finish record, what if this was actually sort of a mixtape? A mix of different styles and different topics? It was a really cool concept, and so I started approaching it that way when we went to whittle down all the songs. It was like, 'This one I like for this reason and this one we like for this reason,' and we just kind of settled on these particular songs for this particular album."

The result is the most sonically and thematically diverse project that JB and the Moonshine Band has released to date, encompassing the band's influences of rock, folk, country and more.

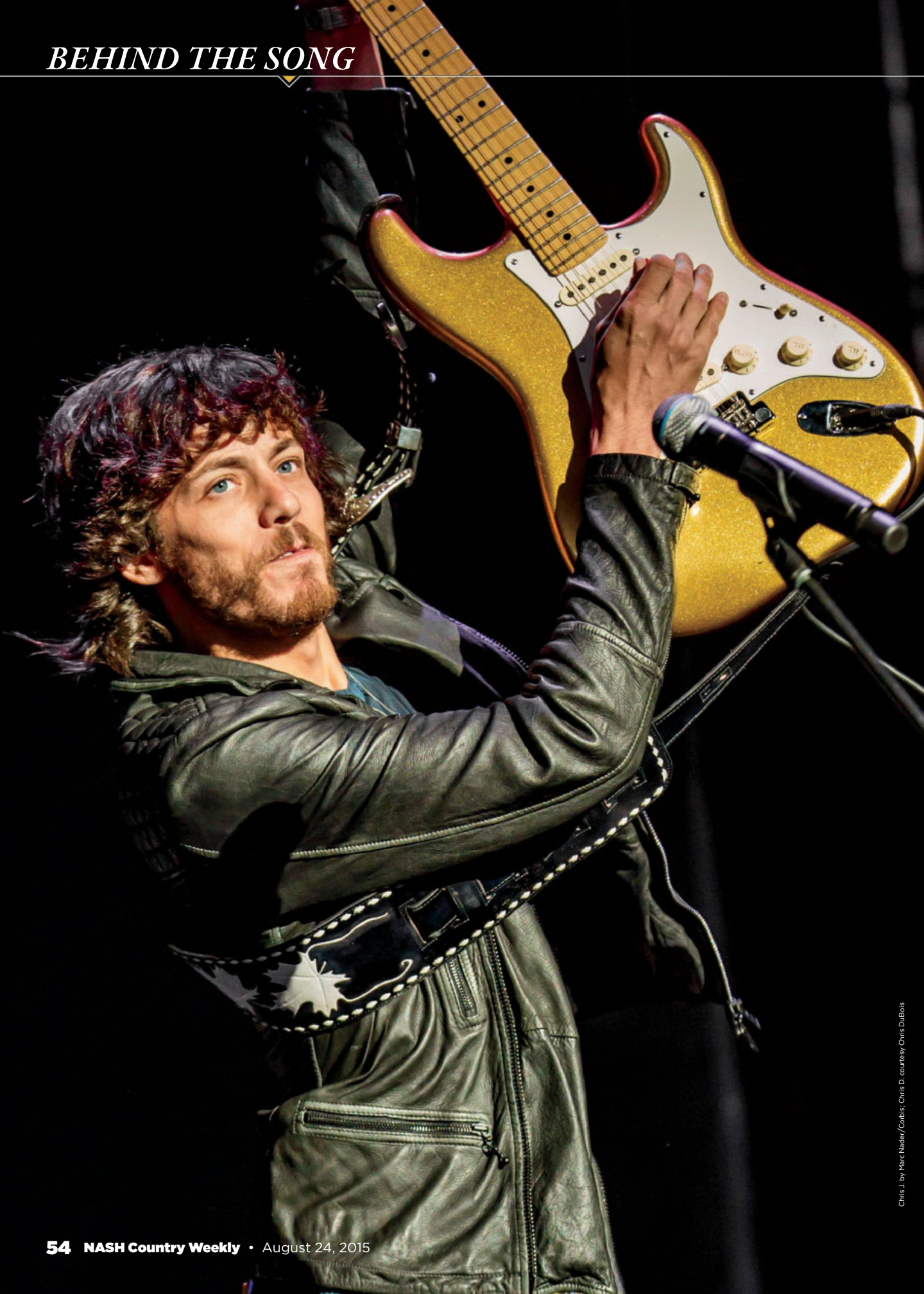
"We're all into everything, every style of music," says Hayden. "Before I played in this band, I was in a metal band. I also played jazz, pop, punk, everything."

"More and more these days, people don't listen to just one style of music, and we're the same way," JB adds. "We just want to be us and we don't want to hide that we have a diverse set of influences. I think that that is healthy, so we kind of let that breathe and grow with this album."

But *Mixtape* is still definitively JB and the Moonshine Band, which means it's still pretty country, at least in that wonderfully distinct and varied way that Texas country is. But like any creative project, it is also decidedly more evolved. "The arrangements are very mature on this album," JB says. "We have matured as composers. You'll notice it says 'produced by JB and the Moonshine Band.' It was produced collectively and it was fun."

TAMMY RAGUSA

BEHIND THE SONG



Chris DuBois by Marc Nader/Contis, Chris D. courtesy Chris DuBois

BOAT ROCKIN'

It was late in the day for Chris Janson and Chris DuBois as they continued to spitball song ideas. Janson was keeping an eye on his watch, knowing he had to pick his kids up at 2 o'clock, but that didn't stop the creative juices from flowing, especially when Chris DuBois spit out the title "Buy Me a Boat" as a possible contender.

"We just kind of coined the phrase off of that and took the 'I don't care, let's just have fun' approach when we started to write it," says Janson. "We decided to write about things that we like and things that we know—pickup trucks, Yeti coolers, boats and just normal, everyday blue-collar life for good ol' boys like us."

With their limited time, the two had to call it a day, but they quickly locked down another date to finish what they started. When they got back together, they hit the ground running with their concept and melody, quickly hashing out the lyrics to fit the theme of "Buy Me a Boat."

"The song kind of wrote itself," says Janson. "We didn't put a whole lot of thought into it. We just put the melody with the guitar that I always write with, and it was good."

When they finished the song, they realized they had something catchy, but it wasn't until the demo was completed that they realized the potential hit they had on their hands. "I have no idea when I write a song how it will go over with the public," Janson says, smiling. "I like to think all of them will go over great, but you just never know. So I just write songs to write songs because that's what I do. I love writing songs. It's the most natural thing for me to do. But after we got the demo back, we definitely knew at that point that we had something awesome, or that we

"BUY ME A BOAT"

CHRIS JANSON

WRITERS: Chris Janson,
Chris DuBois



CUSTOM MADE

One thing **CHRIS DuBOIS** knows how to do is create a song specifically for an artist. Over the years, he has co-written a number of songs for Brad Paisley, including:

"We Danced"

"Water"

"Mud on the Tires"

"Remind Me"

"Welcome to the Future"

"Old Alabama"

"Then"

"Beat This Summer"

"Anything Like Me"

"Southern Comfort Zone"

thought was awesome, anyway."

What he didn't know is that it would bust open the gates to his own career as an artist. Janson had seen previous success with Tim McGraw recording and releasing his song "Truck Yeah," but "Buy Me a Boat" would take care of the job of putting Janson on the country music radar. The infectious song hit home with many listeners, who snatched up the digital downloads and drove it to becoming the first Top 20 single of his recording career. "I had no clue it would take off like this and continue to be rising the way it is," says Janson. "Or that people would be buying it like they are. It's unbelievable."

ALANNA CONAWAY

The week of August 15, 2015

TOP 25 BILLBOARD ALBUMS

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	ANGELS AND ALCOHOL ALAN JACKSON
2	—	THE BLADE ASHLEY MONROE
3	3	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
4	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
5	4	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND
6	5	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
7	6	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
8	9	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
9	10	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
10	11	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
11	7	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
12	8	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS
13	14	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
14	12	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
15	16	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
16	17	SPRING BREAK ... CHECKIN' OUT LUKE BRYAN
17	22	GREATEST HITS SO FAR ... ZAC BROWN BAND
18	15	ABOUT TO GET REAL EASTON CORBIN
19	20	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
20	19	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
21	33	BRINGIN' IT HOME (EP) BIG SMO
22	23	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
23	21	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
24	25	PLATINUM MIRANDA LAMBERT
25	27	THE FIRST TIME KELSEA BALLERINI

TOP 25 BILLBOARD SINGLES

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	4	KICK THE DUST UP LUKE BRYAN
2	3	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY
3	6	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD
4	5	LOVING YOU EASY ZAC BROWN BAND
5	1	ONE HELL OF AN AMEN BRANTLEY GILBERT
6	2	TONIGHT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU JASON ALDEAN
7	7	HELL OF A NIGHT DUSTIN LYNCH
8	8	HOUSE PARTY SAM HUNT
9	11	CRASH AND BURN THOMAS RHETT
10	12	BUY ME A BOAT CHRIS JANSON
11	14	LOSE MY MIND BRETT ELDRIDGE
12	13	JOHN COUGAR, JOHN DEERE, JOHN 3:16 • KEITH URBAN
13	15	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH
14	17	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY KENNY CHESNEY
15	16	FLY MADDIE & TAE
16	19	GONNA WANNA TONIGHT CHASE RICE
17	18	REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN
18	21	LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL
19	22	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
20	25	NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY
21	20	I'M TO BLAME KIP MOORE
22	23	BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION
23	24	LONG STRETCH OF LOVE LADY ANTEBELLUM
24	26	BURNING HOUSE CAM
25	27	RUN AWAY WITH YOU BIG & RICH

TOP 10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
2	2	THE TRAVELING KIND EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL
3	5	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
4	3	STILL RICHARD THOMPSON
5	4	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
6	6	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON
7	8	THE RUFFIAN'S MISFORTUNE RAY WYLIE HUBBARD
8	9	BOUND BY THE BLUES SONNY LANDRETH
9	14	WATKINS FAMILY HOUR WATKINS FAMILY HOUR
10	7	CALL ME INSANE DALE WATSON

SOURCE: AMERICANA AIRPLAY CHART

rdio TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	IF IT TAKES A LIFETIME JASON ISBELL
2	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
3	WHAT DO YOU WANT JERROD NIEMANN
4	STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN
5	BETTER DIG TWO THE BAND PERRY

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY/AMERICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	THE BLADE ASHLEY MONROE
2	WATKINS FAMILY HOUR WATKINS FAMILY HOUR
3	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON
4	ANGELS AND DUST WARREN HAYNES
5	METAMODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY MUSIC • STURGILL SIMPSON

*DATA FROM AUG. 3, 2015

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Janson of Appleton, Wis.



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Park, N.J., with **JOEL CROUSE**



Angie Klaiss of Oak Harbor,
Ohio, with **JOSH TURNER**



KELSEA BALLERINI with Shawn, Taylor
and Keri Bitman of Tampa, Fla.



CHRIS YOUNG with Jennifer
Reinard of St. Louis



FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE with Dan
and Teyler Tulloch of Silver City, N.M.

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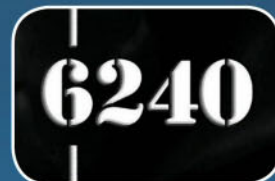
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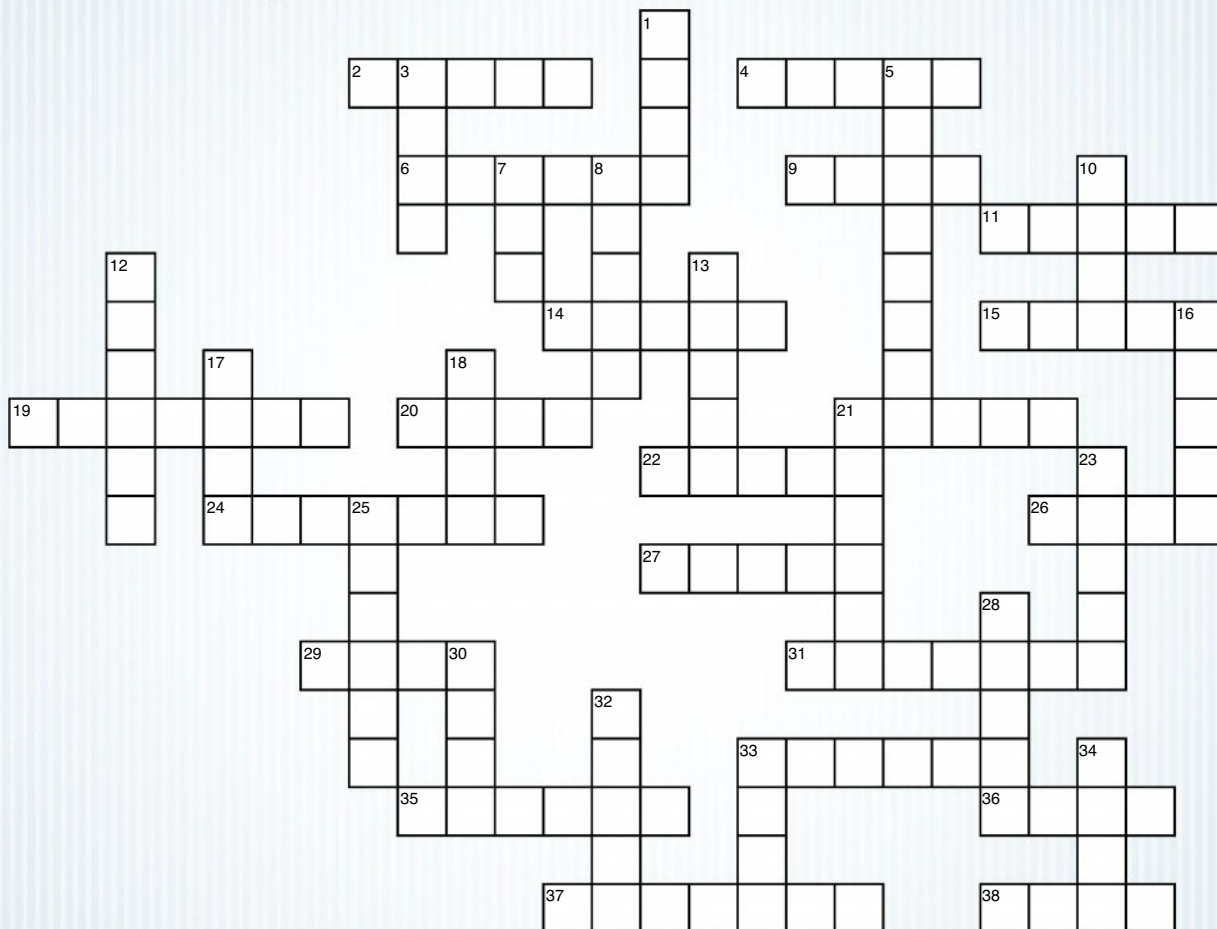
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CROSSWORD

by John Reiman



ACROSS

- 2** Blake Shelton's "Some _____"
- 4** *Boardwalk Empire* actor Buscemi
- 6** "You'll Be There" singer
- 9** Andy Griggs' "She's _____"
- 11** "Lose My Mind" singer
- 14** City in northern Italy
- 15** *Modern Family* actress Bowen
- 19** Nashville-based musicians group The Time _____
- 20** For _____ measure
- 21** Rascal Flatts' "_____"
- 22** Keith Urban's "John Cougar, John _____, John 3:16"
- 24** Presidential hopeful U.S. Senator _____ Graham
- 26** _____ asleep
- 27** David Nail's "Red _____"
- 29** Eli Young Band's "Crazy _____"
- 31** Fortified governmental complex in Moscow
- 33** Merle Haggard's "Someday When _____ Are Good"
- 35** Presidential hopeful U.S. Senator _____ Sanders
- 36** CNN news anchor/journalist Burnett
- 37** "Save It for a Rainy Day" singer
- 38** New artist Dorr

DOWN

- 1** Jerrod Niemann's "What Do You _____"
- 3** Willie Nelson's "Forgiving You Was _____"
- 5** Manassas is here
- 7** Foley or Sovine
- 8** E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to _____*
- 10** Dustin Lynch's "_____ of a Night"
- 12** _____ up
- 13** "Somebody's Hero" singer
- 16** Gisa necropolis is here
- 17** Patty Loveless' "You Can _____ Bad"
- 18** Conway Twitty's "Desperado _____"
- 21** The Band Perry's "_____ Dig Two"
- 23** "Take a Little Ride" singer
- 25** "This" singer
- 28** Keith Whitley's "Don't _____ Your Eyes"
- 30** Eric Church's "_____ a Wrecking Ball"
- 32** "Someone Else's Dream" singer
- 33** Toby Keith's "Country Comes to _____"
- 34** Darryl Worley's "I _____ My Friend"

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COUNTRY FOR LIFE™



"You can sit back and go, 'I'm gonna just do noncommercial artistic songs or whatever,' but we call that the tree falling in the forest."

RONNIE DUNN

"From an early age, my brother called me 'Little Lindsay' because I was the baby sister. Now I am a tall 5-foot-3 on a good day, so people will still call me 'Little L.'"

LINDSAY ELL



THE RACE IS ON

Marty Robbins, who reached the top of the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart 17 times with hits such as "El Paso" and "Don't Worry," competed in more than 30 NASCAR races in the '60s, '70s and '80s, including six top-10 finishes.



BY THE NUMBERS

1 DWIGHT YOAKAM

3 DAYS

43,000+ FANS

2 STAGES

31 ACTS

BUY ME A BOAT SONG

Chris Janson isn't the only country artist to makes waves with a song about a boat. Check out these five dinghy ditties.

"Boat"
Kenny Chesney

"If I Had a Boat"
Lyle Lovett

"Boats to Build"
Guy Clark

"Send a Boat"
Chris Knight

"Where the Boat Leaves From"
Zac Brown Band



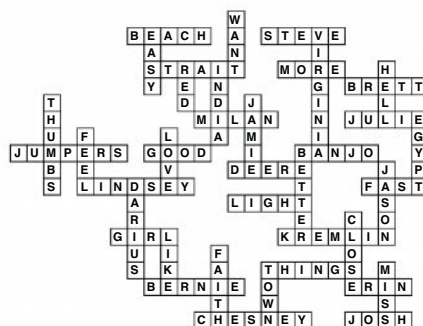
BLAKE VS. MIRANDA



3	BILLBOARD NO. 1 ALBUMS	5
20	BILLBOARD NO. 1 SONGS	4
0	GRAMMYS	2
5	CMA MALE/FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR AWARDS	5
0	POTBELLIED PIGS	2



CROSSWORD SOLUTION (SEE PAGE 60)



Give our kids every
chance to get better.

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE THE MIRACLES ARE.

JENNIFER LOPEZ
ACTRESS, MUSICIAN,
TV PERSONALITY, MOM



Like all moms, I'm always concerned about my children's well-being. But sometimes they get sick. Sometimes they get hurt. That's why I'm so grateful we have children's hospitals. If any child needs a miracle, they'll do everything in their power to make one happen. Please join me in giving sick and injured children every chance to get better. Put Your Money Where the Miracles Are. Give to your Children's Miracle Network Hospital.

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals® raises funds and awareness for 170 member hospitals that provide 32 million treatments each year to kids across the U.S. and Canada. Donations stay local, funding critical treatments, pediatric medical equipment and charitable care. Find out why children's hospitals need community support and find your member hospital at CMNHospitals.org and facebook.com/CMNHospitals.

www.cmnh.co/cumulus

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